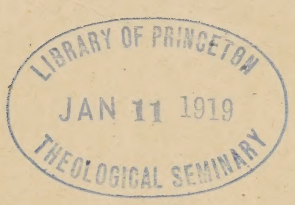
God and My Neighbor

BY

ROBERT BLATCHFORD



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God and my neighbor

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GOD AND MY NEIGHBOR

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JAN 11 1917

BY
ROBERT BLATCHFORD
EDITOR OF THE CLARION, LONDON

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TO

MY SON

ROBERT CORRI BLATCHFORD

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

PREFACE

INFIDEL!

I put the word in capitals, because it is my new name, and I want to get used to it.

INFIDEL!

The name has been bestowed on me by several Christian gentlemen as a reproach, but to my ears it has a quaint and not unpleasing sound.

Infidel! "The notorious Infidel editor of the *Clarion*" is the form used by one True Believer. The words recurred to my mind suddenly, while I was taking my favorite black pipe for a walk along "the pleasant Strand," and I felt a smile glimmer within as I repeated them.

Which is worse, to be a Demagogue or an Infidel? I am both. For while many professed Christians contrive to serve both God and Mammon, the depravity of my nature seems to forbid my serving either.

It was a mild day in mid August, not cold for the time of year. I had been laid up for a few days, and my back was unpropitious, and I was tired. But I felt very happy, for so bad a man, since the sunshine was clear and genial, and my pipe went as easily as a dream.

Besides, one's fellow-creatures are so amusing: especially in the Strand. I had seen a proud and gorgeously upholstered lady lolling languidly in a motor car, and looking extremely pleased with herself — not without reason; and I had met two successful men of great presence, who reminded me somehow of "Porkin and Snob"; and I had noticed a droll little bundle of a baby, in a

fawn colored woolen suit, with a belt slipped almost to her knees, and sweet round eyes as purple as pansies, who was hunting a rolling apple amongst "the wild mob's million feet"; and I had seen a worried-looking matron frantically waving her umbrella to the driver of an omnibus, endanger the silk hat of Porkin, and disturb the complacency of Snob; and I felt glad.

It was at that moment that there popped into my head the full style and title I had earned. "Notorious Infidel editor of the *Clarion!*" These be brave words, indeed. For a moment they almost flattered me into the belief that I had become a member of the higher criminal classes: a bold bad man, like Guy Fawkes, or Kruger, or R. B. Cunninghame-Graham.

"You ought," I said to myself, "to dress the part. You ought to have an S.D.F. sombrero, a slow wise Fabian smile, and the mysterious trousers of a Soho conspirator."

But at the instant I caught a sight of my counterfeit presentment in a shop window, and veiled my haughty crest. *That* a notorious Infidel! Behold a dumpy, comfortable British *paterfamilias* in a light flannel suit and a faded sun hat. No; it will not do. Not a bit like Mephisto: much more like the Miller of the Dee.

Indeed, I am not an irreligious man, really; I am rather a religious man; and this is not an irreligious, but rather a religious book.

Such thoughts should make men humble. After all, may not even John Burns be human; may not Mr. Chamberlain himself have a heart that can feel for another?

Gentle reader, that was a wise as well as a charitable man who taught us there is honor among thieves; although, having never been a member of Parliament himself, he must have spoken from hearsay.

"For all that, Robert, you're a notorious Infidel." I paused — just opposite the Tivoli — and gazed moodily up and down the Strand.

As I have remarked elsewhere, I like the Strand. It is a very human place. But I own that the Strand lacks dignity and beauty, and that amongst its varied odors the odor of sanctity is scarce perceptible.

There are no trees in the Strand. The thoroughfare should be wider. The architecture is, for the most part, banal. For a chief street in a Christian capital, the Strand is not eloquent of high national ideals.

There are derelict churches in the Strand, and dingy blatant taverns, and strident signs and hoardings; and there are slums hard by.

There are thieves in the Strand, and prowling vagrants, and gaunt hawkers, and touts, and gamblers, and loitering failures, with tragic eyes and wilted garments; and prostitutes plying for hire.

And east and west, and north and south of the Strand, there is London. Is there a man amongst all London's millions brave enough to tell the naked truth about the vice and crime, the misery and meanness, the hypocrisies and shames of the great, rich, heathen city? Were such a man to arise amongst us and voice the awful truth, what would his reception be? How would he fare at the hands of the Press, and the Public — and the Church?

As London is, so is England. This is a Christian country. What would Christ think of Park Lane, and the slums, and the hooligans? What would He think of the Stock Exchange, and the Music Hall, and the race-course? What would He think of our national Ideals? What would He think of the House of Peers, and the Bench of Bishops, and the Yellow Press?

Pausing again, over against Exeter Hall, I mentally

apostrophize the Christian British people. "Ladies and Gentlemen," I say, "you are Christian in name, but I discern little of Christ in your ideals, your institutions, or your daily lives. You are a mercenary, self-indulgent, frivolous, boastful, blood-guilty mob of heathen. I like you very much, but that is what you are. And it is you — *you* who call men "Infidels." You ridiculous creatures, what do you mean by it?

If to praise Christ in words, and deny Him in deeds, be Christianity, then London is a Christian city, and England is a Christian nation. For it is very evident that our common English ideals are anti-Christian, and that our commercial, foreign, and social affairs are run on anti-Christian lines.

Renan says, in his *Life of Jesus,* that "were Jesus to return amongst us He would recognize as His disciples, not those who imagine they can compress Him into a few catechismal phrases, but those who labor to carry on His work."

My Christian friends, I am a Socialist, and as such believe in, and work for, universal freedom, and universal brotherhood, and universal peace.

And you are Christians, and I am an "Infidel."

Well, be it even so. I am an "Infidel," and I now ask leave to tell you why.

FOREWORDS

It is impossible for me to present the whole of my case in the space at my command; I can only give an outline. Neither can I do it as well as it ought to be done, but only as well as I am able.

To make up for my shortcomings, and to fortify my case with fuller evidence, I must refer the reader to books written by men better equipped for the work than I.

To do justice to so vast a theme would need a large book, where I can only spare a short chapter, and each large book should be written by a specialist.

For the reader's own satisfaction, then, and for the sake of justice to my cause, I shall venture to suggest a list of books whose contents will atone for all my failures and omissions. And I am justified, I think, in saying that no reader who has not read the books I recommend, or others of like scope and value, can fairly claim to sit on the jury to try this case.

And of these books I shall, first of all, heartily recommend the series of cheap sixpenny reprints now published by the Rationalist Press Association, Johnson's Court, London, E.C.

R.P.A. Reprints

Huxley's *Lectures and Essays.*
Tyndall's *Lectures and Essays.*
Laing's *Human Origins.*
Laing's *Modern Science and Modern Thought.*
Clodd's *Pioneers of Evolution.*
Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma.*

Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe.*
Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God.*
Cotter Morrison's *Service of Man.*
Herbert Spencer's *Education.*

Some Apologists have, I am sorry to say, attempted to disparage those excellent books by alluding to them as "Sixpenny Science" and "Cheap Science." The same method of attack will not be available against most of the books in my next list:

The Golden Bough, Frazer. Macmillan, 36s.
The Legend of Perseus, Hartland. D. Nutt, 25s.
Christianity and Mythology, Robertson. Watts, 8s.
Pagan Christs, Robertson. Watts, 8s.
Supernatural Religion, Cassel. Watts, 6s.
The Martyrdom of Man, Winwood Reade. Kegan Paul, 6s.
Mutual Aid, Kropotkin. Heinemann, 7s. 6d.
The Story of Creation, Clodd. Longmans, 3s. 6d.
Buddha and Buddhism, Lillie. Clark, 3s. 6d.
Shall We Understand the Bible? Williams. Black, 1s.
What is Religion? Tolstoy. Free Age Press, 6d.
What I Believe, Tolstoy. Free Age Press, 6d.
The Life of Christ, Renan. Scott, 1s. 6d.

I also recommend Herbert Spencer's *Principles of Sociology,* and Lecky's *History of European Morals.*

Of pamphlets there are hundreds. Readers will get full information from Watts & Co., 17 Johnson's Court, London, E.C.

I can warmly recommend *The Miracles of Christian Belief* and *The Claims of Christianity,* by Charles Watts, and *Christianity and Progress,* a penny pamphlet, by G. W. Foote (The Freethought Publishing Company).

I should also like to mention *An Easy Outline of Evolution,* by Dennis Hird (Watts & Co., 2s. 6d.). This book will be of great help to those who want to scrape acquaintance with the theory of evolution.

Finally, let me ask the general reader to put aside all prejudice, and give both sides a fair hearing. Most of

the books I have mentioned above are of more actual value to the public of to-day than many standard works which hold world-wide reputations.

No man should regard the subject of religion as decided for him until he has read *The Golden Bough*. *The Golden Bough* is one of those books that *unmake* history.

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GOD AND MY NEIGHBOR

THE SIN OF UNBELIEF

HUXLEY quotes with satirical gusto Dr. Wace's declaration as to the word "Infidel." Said Dr. Wace: "The word infidel, perhaps, carries an unpleasant significance. Perhaps it is right that it should. It is, and it ought to be, an unpleasant thing for a man to have to say plainly that he does not believe in Jesus Christ."

Be it pleasant or unpleasant to be an unbeliever, one thing is quite clear: religious people intend the word Infidel to carry "an unpleasant significance" when they apply to it one. It is in their minds a term of reproach. Because they think it is *wicked* to deny what they believe.

To call a man Infidel, then, is tacitly to accuse him of a kind of moral turpitude.

But a little while ago, to be an Infidel was to be socially taboo. But a little while earlier, to be an Infidel was to be persecuted. But a little earlier still, to be an Infidel was to be an outlaw, subject to the penalty of death.

Now, it is evident that to visit the penalty of social ostracism or public contumely upon all who reject the popular religion is to erect an arbitrary barrier against intellectual and spiritual advance, and to put a protective tariff upon orthodoxy to the disadvantage of science and free thought.

The root of the idea that it is wicked to reject the

popular religion — a wickedness of which Christ and Socrates and Buddha are all represented to have been guilty — thrives in the belief that the Scriptures are the actual words of God, and that to deny the truth of the Scriptures is to deny and to affront God.

But the difficulty of the unbeliever lies in the fact that he cannot believe the Scriptures to be the actual words of God.

The Infidel, therefore, is not denying God's words, nor disobeying God's commands: he is denying the words and disobeying the commands of *men*.

No man who *knew* that there was a good and wise God would be so foolish as to deny that God. No man would reject the words of God if he knew that God spoke those words.

But the doctrine of the divine origin of the Scriptures rests upon the authority of the Church; and the difference between the Infidel and the Christian is that the Infidel rejects and the Christian accepts the authority of the Church.

Belief and unbelief are not matters of moral excellence or depravity: they are questions of evidence.

The Christian believes the Scriptures because they are the words of God. But he believes they are the words of God because some other man has told him so.

Let him probe the matter to the bottom, and he will inevitably find that his authority is human, and not, as he supposes, divine.

For you, my Christian friend, have never *seen* God. You have never heard God's voice. You have received from God no message in spoken or written words. You have no direct divine warrant for the divine authorship of the Scriptures. The authority on which your belief

in the divine revelation rests consists entirely of the Scriptures themselves and the statements of the Church. But the Church is composed solely of human beings, and the Scriptures were written and translated and printed solely by human beings.

You believe that the Ten Commandments were dictated to Moses by God. But God has not told *you* so. You only believe the statement of the unknown author of the Pentateuch that God told *him* so. You do not *know* who Moses was. You do not *know* who wrote the Pentateuch. You do not *know* who edited and translated the Scriptures.

Clearly, then, you accept the Scriptures upon the authority of unknown men, and upon no other demonstrable authority whatever.

Clearly, then, to doubt the doctrine of the divine revelation of the Scriptures is not to doubt the word of God, but to doubt the words of men.

But the Christian seems to suspect the Infidel of rejecting the Christian religion out of sheer wantonness, or from some base or sinister motive.

The fact being, that the Infidel can only believe those things which his own reason tells him are true. He opposes the popular religion because his reason tells him it is not true, and because his reason tells him insistently that a religion that is not true is not good, but bad. In thus obeying the dictates of his own reason, and in thus advocating what to him seems good and true, the Infidel is acting honorably, and is as well within his right as any Pope or Prelate.

That base or mercenary motives should be laid to the charge of the Infidel seems to me as absurd as that base or mercenary motives should be laid to the charge of

the Socialist. The answer to such libels stares us in the face. Socialism and Infidelity are not popular, nor profitable, nor respectable.

If you wish to lose caste, to miss preferment, to endanger your chances of gaining money and repute, turn Infidel and turn Socialist.

Briefly, Infidelity does not pay. It is "not a pleasant thing to be an Infidel."

The Christian thinks it his duty to "make it an unpleasant thing" to deny the "true faith." He thinks it his duty to protect God, and to revenge His outraged name upon the Infidel and the Heretic. The Jews thought the same. The Mohammedan thinks the same. How many cruel and sanguinary wars has that presumptuous belief inspired? How many persecutions, outrages, martyrdoms, and massacres have been perpetrated by fanatics who have been "jealous for the Lord"?

As I write these lines Christians are murdering Jews in Russia, and Mohammedans are murdering Christians in Macedonia to the glory of God. Is God so weak that He needs foolish men's defense? Is He so feeble that He cannot judge nor avenge?

My Christian friend, so jealous for the Lord, did you ever regard your hatred of "Heretics" and "Infidels" in the light of history?

The history of civilization is the history of successions of brave "Heretics" and "Infidels," who have denied false dogmas or brought new truths to light.

The righteous men, the "true believers" of the day, have cursed these heroes and reviled them, have tortured, scourged, or murdered them. And the children of the "True Believers" have adopted the heresies as

true, and have glorified the dead Heretics, and then turned round to curse or murder the new Heretic who fain would lead them a little further toward the light.

Copernicus, who first solved the mystery of the Solar System, was excommunicated for heresy. But Christians acknowledge now that the earth goes round the sun, and the name of Copernicus is honored.

Bruno, who first declared the stars to be suns, and "led forth Arcturus and his host," was burnt at the stake for heresy.

Galileo, the father of telescopic astronomy, was threatened with death for denying the errors of the Church, was put in prison and tortured as a heretic. Christians acknowledge now that Galileo spoke the truth, and his name is honored.

As it has been demonstrated in those cases, it has been demonstrated in thousands of other cases, that the Heretics have been right, and the True Believers have been wrong.

Step by step the Church has retreated. Time after time the Church has come to accept the truths, for telling which She persecuted, or murdered, her teachers. But still the True Believers hate the Heretic, and regard it as a righteous act to make it "unpleasant" to be an "Infidel."

After taking a hundred steps away from old dogmas and towards the truth, the True Believer shudders at the request to take one more. After two thousand years of foolish and wicked persecution of good men, the True Believer remains faithful to the tradition that it "ought to be an unpleasant thing" to expose the errors of the Church.

The Christians used to declare that all the millions

of men and women outside the Christian Church would "burn forever in burning Hell." They do not like to be reminded of that folly now.

They used to declare that every unbaptized baby would go to Hell and burn forever in fire and brimstone. They do not like to be reminded of that folly now.

They used to believe in witchcraft, and they burned millions — yes, millions — of innocent women as witches. They do not like to hear of witchcraft now.

They used to believe the legends of Adam and Eve, and the Flood. They call them allegories now.

They used to believe that the world was made in six days. Now they talk mildly about "geological periods."

They used to denounce Darwinism as impious and absurd. They have since "cheerfully accepted" the theory of evolution.

They used to believe that the sun revolved round the earth, and that he who thought otherwise was an Infidel, and would be damned in the "bottomless pit." But now——! Now they declare that Christ was God, and His mother a virgin; that three persons are one person; that those who trust in Jesus shall go to Heaven, and those who do not trust in Jesus will be "lost." And if any one denies these statements, they call him Infidel.

Are you not aware, friend Christian, that what was Infidelity is now orthodoxy? It is even so. Heresies for which men used to be burned alive are now openly accepted by the Church. There is not a divine living who would not have been burned at the stake three centuries ago for expressing the beliefs he now holds. Yet you call a man Infidel for being a century in advance of you. History has taught you nothing. It has not occurred to you that as the "infidelity" of yesterday has

become the enlightened religion of to-day, it is possible that the "infidelity" of to-day may become the enlightened religion of to-morrow.

Civilization is built up of the "heresies" of men who thought freely and spoke bravely. Those men were called "Infidels" when they were alive. But now they are called the benefactors of the world.

Infidel! The name has been borne, good Christian, by some of the noblest of our race. I take it from you with a smile. I am an easiful old pagan, and I am not angry with you at all — you funny little champion of the Most High.

ONE REASON

I HAVE been asked why I have opposed Christianity. I have several reasons, which shall appear in due course. At present I offer one.

I oppose Christianity because *it is not true.*

No honest man will ask for any other reason.

But it may be asked why I say that Christianity is not true; and that is a very proper question, which I shall do my best to answer.

WHAT I CAN AND CANNOT BELIEVE

I HOPE it will not be supposed that I have any personal animus against Christians or Christian ministers, although I am hostile to the Church. Many ministers and many Christian laymen I have known are admirable men. Some I know personally are as able and as good as any men I have met; but I speak of the Churches, not of individuals.

I have known Catholic priests and sisters who were worthy and charming, and there are many such; but I do not like the Catholic Church. I have known Tories and Liberals who were real good fellows, and clever fellows, and there are many such; but I do not like the Liberal and Tory parties. I have known clergymen of the Church of England who were real live men, and real English gentlemen, and there are many such; but I do not like the Church.

I was not always an Agnostic, or a Rationalist, or an "Infidel," or whatever Christians may choose to call me.

I was not perverted by an Infidel book. I had not read one when I wavered first in my allegiance to the orthodoxies. I was set doubting by a religious book written to prove the "Verity of Christ's Resurrection from the Dead." But as a child I was thoughtful, and asked myself questions, as many children do, which the Churches would find it hard to answer to-day.

I have not ceased to believe what I was taught as a child because I have grown wicked. I have ceased to

believe it because, after twenty years' hard thinking, I *cannot* believe it.

I cannot believe, then, that the Christian religion is true.

I cannot believe that the Bible is the word of God. For the word of God would be above criticism and beyond disproof, and the Bible is not above criticism nor beyond disproof.

I cannot believe that any religion has been revealed to Man by God. Because a revealed religion would be perfect, but no known religion is perfect; and because history and science show us that known religions have not been revealed, but have been evolved from other religions. There is no important feature of the Christian religion which can be called original. All the rites, mysteries, and doctrines of Christianity have been borrowed from older faiths.

I cannot believe that Jehovah, the God of the Bible, is the Creator of the known universe. The Bible God, Jehovah, is a man-made God, evolved from the idol of an obscure and savage tribe. The Bible shows us this quite plainly.

I cannot believe that the Bible and the Testament are historically true. I regard most of the events they record as fables, and most of their characters as myths.

I cannot believe in the existence of Jesus Christ, nor Buddha, nor Moses. I believe that these are ideal characters constructed from still more ancient legends and traditions.

I cannot believe that the Bible version of the relations of man and God is correct. For that version, and all other religious versions known to me, represents man as sinning against or forsaking God, and God as punishing or pardoning man.

But if God made man, then God is responsible for all man's acts and thoughts, and therefore man cannot sin against God.

And if man could not sin against God, but could only act as God ordained that he should act, then it is against reason to suppose that God could be angry with man, or could punish man, or see any offense for which to pardon man.

I cannot believe that man has ever forsaken God. Because history shows that man has from the earliest times been eagerly and pitifully seeking God, and has served and praised and sacrificed to God with a zeal akin to madness. But God has made no sign.

I cannot believe that man was at the first created "perfect," and that he "fell." (How could the perfect fall?) I believe the theory of evolution, which shows not a fall but a gradual rise.

I cannot believe that God is a loving "Heavenly Father," taking a tender interest in mankind. Because He has never interfered to prevent the horrible cruelties and injustices of man to man, and because he has permitted evil to rule the world. I cannot reconcile the idea of a tender Heavenly Father with the known horrors of war, slavery, pestilence, and insanity. I cannot discern the hand of a loving Father in the slums, in the earthquake, in the cyclone. I cannot understand the indifference of a loving Father to the law of prey, nor to the terrors and tortures of leprosy, cancer, cholera, and consumption.

I cannot believe that God is a personal God, who intervenes in human affairs. I cannot see in science, nor in experience, nor in history any signs of such a God, nor of such intervention.

I cannot believe that God hears and answers prayer,

because the universe is governed by laws, and there is no reason to suppose that those laws are ever interfered with. Besides, an all-wise God knows what to do better than man can tell Him, and a just God would act justly without requiring to be reminded of His duty by one of His creatures.

I cannot believe that miracles ever could or ever did happen. Because the universe is governed by laws, and there is no credible instance on record of those laws being suspended.

I cannot believe that God "created" man, as man now is, by word of mouth and in a moment. I accept the theory of evolution, which teaches that man was slowly evolved by natural process from lower forms of life, and that this evolution took millions of years.

I cannot believe that Jesus Christ was God, nor that He was the Son of God. There is no solid evidence for the miracle of the Incarnation, and I see no reason for the Incarnation.

I cannot believe that Christ died to save man from Hell, nor that He died to save man from sin. Because I do not believe God would condemn the human race to eternal torment for being no better than He had made them, and because I do not see that the death of Christ has saved man from sin.

I cannot believe that God would think it necessary to come on earth as a man, and die on the Cross. Because if that was to atone for man's sin, it was needless, as God could have forgiven man without Himself suffering.

I cannot believe that God would send His son to die on the Cross. Because He could have forgiven man without subjecting His son to pain.

I cannot accept any doctrine of atonement. Because to forgive the guilty because the innocent had suffered

would be unjust and unreasonable, and to forgive the guilty because a third person begged for his pardon would be unjust.

I cannot believe that a good God would allow sin to enter the world. Because He would hate sin and would have power to destroy or to forbid it.

I cannot believe that a good God would create or tolerate a Devil, nor that he would allow the Devil to tempt man.

I cannot believe the story of the virgin birth of Christ. Because for a man to be born of a virgin would be a miracle, and I cannot believe in miracles.

I cannot believe the story of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Because that would be a miracle, and because there is no solid evidence that it occurred.

I cannot believe that faith in the Godhood of Christ is necessary to virtue or to happiness. Because I know that some holding such faith are neither happy nor virtuous, and that some are happy and virtuous who do not hold that faith.

The differences between the religious and the scientific theories, or, as I should put it, between superstition and rationalism, are clearly marked and irreconcilable.

The supernaturalist stands by "creation": the rationalist stands by "evolution." It is impossible to reduce these opposite ideas to a common denominator.

The creation theory alleges that the earth, and the sun, and the moon, and man, and the animals were "created" by God, instantaneously, by word of mouth, out of nothing.

The evolution theory alleges that they were evolved, slowly, by natural processes out of previously existing matter.

The supernaturalist alleges that religion was revealed to

man by God, and that the form of this revelation is a sacred book.

The rationalist alleges that religion was evolved by slow degrees and by human minds, and that all existing forms of religion and all existing "sacred books," instead of being "revelations," are evolutions from religious ideas and forms and legends of prehistoric times. It is impossible to reduce these opposite theories to a common denominator.

The Christians, the Hindoos, the Parsees, the Buddhists, and the Mohammedans have each their "Holy Bible" or "sacred book." Each religion claims that its own Bible is the direct revelation of God, and is the only true Bible teaching the only true faith. Each religion regards all the other religions as spurious.

The supernaturalists believe in miracles, and each sect claims that the miracles related in its own inspired sacred book prove the truth of that book and of the faith taught therein.

No religion accepts the truth of any other religion's miracles. The Hindoo, the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, the Parsee, the Christian each believes that his miracles are the only real miracles.

The Protestant denies the miracles of the Roman Catholic.

The rationalist denies all miracles alike. "Miracles never happen."

The Christian Bible is full of miracles. The Christian Religion is founded on miracles.

No rationalist believes in miracles. Therefore no rationalist can accept the Christian Religion.

If you discard "Creation" and accept evolution; if you discard "revelation" and accept evolution; if you discard miracles and accept natural law, there is nothing

left of the Christian Religion but the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

And when one sees that all religions and all ethics, even the oldest known, have, like all language and all science and all philosophy and all existing species of animals and plants, been slowly evolved from lower and ruder forms; and when one learns that there have been many Christs, and that the evidence of the life of Jesus is very slight, and that all the acts and words of Jesus had been anticipated by other teachers long before the Christian era, then it is borne in upon one's mind that the historic basis of Christianity is very frail. And when one realizes that the Christian theology, besides being borrowed from older religions, is manifestly opposed to reason and to facts, then one reaches a state of mind which entitles the orthodox Christian to call one an "Infidel," and to make it "unpleasant" for one to the glory of God.

That is the position in which I stand at present, and it is partly to vindicate that position, and to protest against those who feel as I feel being subjected to various kinds of "unpleasantness," that I undertake this Apology.

THE OLD TESTAMENT

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

THE question of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures is one of great importance.

If the Bible is a divine revelation, if it contains the actual word of God, and nothing but the word of God, then it is folly to doubt any statement it contains.

If the Bible is merely the work of men, if it contains only the words of men, then, like all other human work, the Bible is fallible, and must submit to criticism and examination, as all fallible human work must.

The Christian Religion stands or falls by the truth of the Bible.

If the Bible is the word of God the Bible must be true, and the Christian Religion must be true.

But, as I said before, the claim for the divine origin of the Bible has not been made by God, but by men.

We have therefore no means of testing the Bible's title to divine revelation other than by criticism and examination of the Bible itself.

If the Bible is the word of God — the all-wise and perfect God — the Bible will be perfect. If the Bible is not perfect it cannot be the word of a God who is perfect.

The Bible is not perfect. Historically, scientifically, and ethically the Bible is imperfect.

If the Bible is the word of God it will present to us the perfect God as He is, and every act of His it records will be perfection. But the Bible does not show us a perfect God, but a very imperfect God, and such of His acts as the Bible records are imperfect.

I say, then, with strong conviction, that I do not believe

the Bible to be the word of God; that I do not believe it to be inspired of God; that I do not believe it to contain any divine revelation of God to man. Why?

Let us consider the claim that the Bible is the word of God. Let us, first of all, consider it from the common-sense point of view, as ordinary men of the world, trying to get at the truth and the reason of a thing.

What would one naturally expect in a revelation by God to man?

1. We should expect God to reveal truths of which mankind were ignorant.

2. We should expect God to make no errors of fact in His revelation.

3. We should expect God to make His revelation so clear and so definite that it could be neither misunderstood nor misrepresented.

4. We should expect God to insure that His revelation should reach *all* men; and should reach all men directly and quickly.

5. We should expect God's revelation of the relations existing between Himself and man to be true.

6. We should expect the ethical code in God's revelation to be complete, and final, and perfect. The divine ethics should at least be above human criticism and beyond human amendment.

To what extent does the Bible revelation fulfill the above natural expectations?

1. Does the Bible reveal any new moral truths?

I cannot speak very positively, but I think there is very little moral truth in the Bible which has not been, or will not be, traced back to more ancient times and religions.

2. Does the Bible revelation contain no errors of fact?

I claim that it contains many errors of fact, and the Higher Criticism supports the claim; as we shall see.

3. Is the Bible revelation so clear and explicit that no difference of opinion as to its meaning is possible?

No. It is not. No one living can claim anything of the kind.

4. Has God's revelation, as given in the Bible, reached all men?

No. After thousands of years it is not yet known to one-half the human race.

5. Is God's revelation of the relations between man and God true?

I claim that it is not true. For the word of God makes it appear that man was created by God in His own image, and that man sinned against God. Whereas man, being only what God made him, and having only the powers God gave him, *could* not sin against God, any more than a steam-engine can sin against the engineer who designed and built it.

6. Is the ethical code of the Bible complete, and final, and perfect?

No. The ethical code of the Bible gradually develops and improves. Had it been divine it would have been perfect from the first. It is because it is human that it develops. As the prophets and the poets of the Jews grew wiser, and gentler, and more enlightened, so the revelation of God grew wiser and gentler with them. Now, God would know from the beginning; but men would have to learn. Therefore the Bible writings would appear to be human, and not divine.

Let us look over these points again, and make the matter still clearer and more simple.

If the children of an earthly father had wandered away and forgotten him, and were, for lack of guidance, living evil lives; and if the earthly father wished his children to know that they were his children, wished them to know

what he had done for them, what they owed to him, what penalty they might fear, or reward they might ask from him; if he wished them to live cleanly and justly, and to love him, and at last come home to him — what would that earthly father do?

He would send his message to *all* his children, instead of sending it to one, and trusting him to repeat it correctly to the others. He would try to so word his message as that all his children might understand it.

He would send his children the very best rules of life he knew. He would take great pains to avoid error in matters of fact.

If, after the message was sent, his children quarreled and fought about its meaning, their earthly father would not sit silent and allow them to hate and slay each other, because of a misconception; but would send at once, and make his meaning plain to all.

And if an earthly father would act thus wisely and thus kindly, "how much more your Father which is in Heaven"?

But the Bible revelation was not given to all the people of the earth. It was given to a handful of Jews. It was not so explicit as to make disagreement impossible. It is thousands of years since the revelation of God began, and yet to-day it is not known to hundreds of millions of human beings, and amongst those whom it has reached there is endless bitter disagreement as to its meaning.

Now, what is the use of a revelation which does not reveal more than is known, which does not reveal truth only, which does not reach half those who need it, which cannot be understood by those it does reach?

But you will regard me as a prejudiced witness. I shall therefore, in my effort to prove the Bible fallible, quote almost wholly from Christian critics.

And I take the opportunity to here recommend very strongly *Shall We Understand the Bible,* by the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams; Adam & Charles Black. 1s. net.

There are two chief theories as to the inspiration of the Bible. One is the old theory that the Bible is the actual word of God, and nothing but the word of God, directly revealed by God to Moses and the prophets. The other is the new theory: that the Bible is the work of many men whom God had inspired to speak or write the truth.

The old theory is well described by Dr. Washington Gladden in the following passage:

> They imagine that the Bible must have originated in a manner purely miraculous; and, though they know very little about its origin, they conceive of it as a book that was written in heaven in the English tongue, divided there into chapters and verses, with headlines and reference marks, printed in small pica, bound in calf, and sent down by angels in its present form.

The newer idea of the inspiration of the Bible is also well expressed by Dr. Gladden; thus:

> Revelation, we shall be able to understand, is not the dictation by God of words to men that they may be written down in books: it is rather the disclosure of the truth and love of God to men in the processes of history, in the development of the moral order of the world. It is the light that lighteth every man, shining in the paths that lead to righteousness and life. There is a moral leadership of God in history; revelation is the record of that leadership. It is by no means confined to words; its most impressive disclosures are in the field of action. "Thus *did* the Lord," as Dr. Bruce has said, is a more perfect formula of revelation than "Thus saith the Lord." It is in that great historical movement of which the Bible is the record that we find the revelation of God to men.

The old theory of Bible inspiration was, as I have said, the theory that the Bible was the actual and pure word of God, and was true in every circumstance and detail.

Now, if an almighty and all-wise God had spoken or written every word of the Bible, then that book would, of

course, be wholly and unshakably true in its every statement.

But if the Bible was written by men, some of them more or less inspired, then it would not, in all probability, be wholly perfect.

The more inspiration its writers had from God, the more perfect it would be. The less inspiration its writers had from God, the less perfect it would be.

Wholly perfect, it might be attributed to a perfect being. Partly perfect, it might be the work of less perfect beings. Less perfect, it would have to be put down to less perfect beings.

Containing any fault or error, it could not be the actual word of God, and the more errors and faults it contained, the less inspiration of God would be granted to its authors.

I will quote again from Dr. Gladden:

> What I desire to show is, that the work of putting the Bible into its present form was not done in heaven, but on earth; that it was not done by angels, but by men; that it was not done all at once, but a little at a time, the work of preparing and perfecting it extending over several centuries, and employing the labors of many men in different lands and long-divided generations.

I now turn to Dr. Aked. On page 25 of his book, *Changing Creeds,* he says:

> Ignorance has claimed the Bible for its own. Bigotry has made the Bible its battleground. Its phrases have become the shibboleth of pietistic sectarians. Its authority has been evoked in support of the foulest crimes committed by the vilest men; and its very existence has been made a pretext for theories which shut out God from His own world. In our day Bible-worship has become, with many very good but very unthoughtful people, a disease.

So much for the attitude of the various schools of religious thought towards the Bible.

Now, in the opinion of these Christian teachers, is the Bible perfect or imperfect? Dr. Aked gives his opinion with characteristic candor and energy:

> For observe the position: men are told that the Bible is the infallible revelation of God to man, and that its statements concerning God and man are to be unhesitatingly accepted as statements made upon the authority of God. They turn to its pages, and they find historical errors, arithmetical mistakes, scientific blunders (or, rather, blunders most unscientific), inconsistencies, and manifold contradictions; and, what is far worse, they find that the most horrible crimes are committed by men who calmly plead in justification of their terrible misdeeds the imperturbable "God said." The heart and conscience of man indignantly rebel against the representations of the Most High given in some parts of the Bible. What happens? Why, such men declare — are now declaring, and will in constantly increasing numbers, and with constantly increasing force and boldness declare — that they can have nothing to do with a book whose errors a child can discover, and whose revelation of God partakes at times of blasphemy against man.

I need hardly say that I agree with every word of the above. If any one asked me what evidence exists in support of the claims that the Bible is the word of God, or that it was in any real sense of the words "divinely inspired," I should answer, without the least hesitation, that there does not exist a scrap of evidence of any kind in support of such a claim.

Let us give a little consideration to the origin of the Bible. The first five books of the Bible, called the Pentateuch, were said to be written by Moses. Moses was not, and could not, have been the author of those books. There is, indeed, no reliable evidence to prove that Moses ever existed. Whether he was a fictitious hero, or a solar myth, or what he was, no man knows.

Neither does there appear to be any certainty that the biblical books attributed to David, to Solomon, to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest were really written by those kings or prophets, or even in their age.

And after these books, or many of them, had been written, they were entirely lost, and are said to have been reproduced by Ezra.

Add to these facts that the original Hebrew had no vowels, that many of the sacred books were written without vowels, and that the vowels were added long after; and remember that, as Dr. Aked says, the oldest Hebrew Bible in existence belongs to the tenth century after Christ; and it will begin to appear that the claim for biblical infallibility is utterly absurd.

But I must not offer these statements on my own authority. Let us return to Dr. Gladden. On page 11 of *Who Wrote the Bible?* I find the following:

> The first of these holy books of the Jews was, then, The Law, contained in the first five books of our Bible, known among us as the Pentateuch, and called by the Jews sometimes simply "The Law," and sometimes "The Law of Moses." This was supposed to be the oldest portion of their Scriptures, and was by them regarded as much more sacred and authoritative than any other portion. To Moses, they said, God spake face to face; to the other holy men much less distinctly. Consequently, their appeal is most often to the law of Moses.

The sacredness of the five books of "The Law," then, rests upon the belief that they were written by Moses, who had spoken face to face with God.

So that if Moses did not write those books, their sacredness is a myth. Now, on page 42, Dr. Gladden says:

> 1. The Pentateuch could never have been written by any one man, inspired or otherwise.
> 2. It is a composite work, in which many hands have been engaged. The production of it extends over many centuries.
> 3. It contains writings which are as old as the time of Moses, and some that are much older. It is impossible to tell how much of it came from the hand of Moses; but there are considerable portions of it which, although they may have been somewhat modified by later editors, are substantially as he left them.

On page 45 Dr. Gladden, again speaking of the Pentateuch, says:

But the story of Genesis goes back to a remote antiquity. The last event related in that book occurred four hundred years before Moses was born; it was as distant from him as the discovery of America by Columbus is from us; and other portions of the narrative, such as the stories of the Flood and the Creation, stretch back into the shadows of the age which precedes history. Neither Moses nor any one living in his day could have given us these reports from his own knowledge. Whoever wrote this must have obtained his materials in one of three ways:

1. They might have been given to him by divine revelation from God.

2. He might have gathered them up from oral tradition, from stories, folklore, transmitted from mouth to mouth, and so preserved from generation to generation.

3. He might have found them in written documents existing at the time of his writing.

As many of the laws and incidents in the books of Moses were known to the Chaldeans, the "direct revelation of God" theory is not plausible. On this point Dr. Gladden's opinion supports mine. He says, on page 61:

That such is the fact with respect to the structure of these ancient writings is now beyond question. And our theory of inspiration must be adjusted to this fact. Evidently neither the theory of verbal inspiration, nor the theory of plenary inspiration, can be made to fit the facts which a careful study of the writings themselves brings before us. These writings are not inspired in the sense which we have commonly given that word. The verbal theory of inspiration was only tenable while they were supposed to be the work of a single author. To such a composite literature no such theory will apply. "To make this claim," says Professor Ladd, "and yet accept the best ascertained results of criticism, would compel us to take such positions as the following: the original authors of each one of the writings which enter into the composite structure were infallibly inspired; every one who made any changes in any one of these fundamental writings was infallibly inspired; every compiler who put together two or more of these writings was infallibly inspired, both as to his selections and omissions, and as to any connecting or explanatory words which he might himself write; every redactor was infallibly inspired to correct and supplement, and omit that which was the product of previous infallible inspirations. Or, perhaps, it might seem more convenient to attack the claim of a plenary inspiration to the last redactor of all; but then we should probably have selected of all others the one least able to bear the weight of such a claim. Think of making the claim for a plenary inspiration of the Pentateuch in its present form on the ground of the infallibility of that one

of the scribes who gave it its last touches some time subsequent to the death of Ezra."

Remember that Dr. Gladden declares, on page 5, that he shall state no conclusions as to the history of the sacred writings which will not be accepted by conservative critics.

On page 54 Dr. Gladden quotes the following from Dr. Perowne:

> The first *composition* of the Pentateuch as a whole could not have taken place till after the Israelites entered Canaan.
> The whole work did not finally assume its present shape till its revision was undertaken by Ezra after the return from the Babylonish captivity.

On page 25 Dr. Gladden himself speaks as follows:

> The common argument by which Christ is made a witness to the authenticity and infallible authority of the Old Testament runs as follows:
> Christ quotes Moses as the author of this legislation; therefore Moses must have written the whole Pentateuch. Moses was an inspired prophet; therefore all the teaching of the Pentateuch must be infallible.
> The facts are that Jesus nowhere testifies that Moses wrote the whole of the Pentateuch; and that he nowhere guarantees the infallibility either of Moses or of the book. On the contrary, he set aside as inadequate or morally defective, certain laws which in this book are ascribed to Moses.

So much for the authorship and the inspiration of the first five books of the Bible.

As to the authorship of other books of the Bible, Dr. Gladden says of Judges and Samuel, that we do not know the authors nor the dates.

Of Kings he says: "The name of the author is concealed from us." The origin and correctness of the Prophecies and Psalms, he tells us, are problematical.

Of the Books of Esther and Daniel, Dr. Gladden says: "That they are founded on fact I do not doubt; but it is, perhaps, safer to regard them both rather as historical fictions than as veritable histories."

Of Daniel, Dean Farrar wrote:

The immense majority of scholars of name and acknowledged competence in England and Europe have now been led to form an irresistible conclusion that the Book of Daniel was not written, and could not have been written, in its present form, by the prophet Daniel, B. C. 534, but that it can only have been written, as we now have it, in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, about B. C. 164, and that the object of the pious and patriotic author was to inspirit his desponding countrymen by splendid specimens of that lofty moral fiction which was always common amongst the Jews after the Exile, and was known as "The Haggadah." So clearly is this proven to most critics, that they willingly suffer the attempted refutations of their views to sink to the ground under the weight of their own inadequacy.[1]

I return now to Dr. Aked, from whose book I quote the following:

Dr. Clifford has declared that there is not a man who has given a day's attention to the question who holds the complete freedom of the Bible from inaccuracy. He has added that "it is become more and more impossible to affirm the inerrancy of the Bible." Dr. Lyman Abbott says that "an infallible book is an impossible conception, and to-day no one really believes that our present Bible is such a book."

Compare those opinions with the following extract from this first article in *The Bible and the Child:*

The change of view respecting the Bible, which has marked the advancing knowledge and more earnest studies of this generation, is only the culmination of the discovery that there were different documents in the Book of Genesis — a discovery first published by the physician, Jean Astruc, in 1753. There are *three* widely divergent ways of dealing with these results of profound study, each of which is almost equally dangerous to the faith of the rising generation.

1. Parents and teachers may go on inculcating dogmas about the Bible and methods of dealing with it which have long become impossible to those who have really tried to follow the manifold discoveries of modern inquiry with perfectly open and unbiased minds. There are a certain number of persons who, when their minds have become stereotyped in foregone conclusions, are simply *incapable* of grasping new truths. They become obstructives, and not infrequently bigoted obstructives. As convinced as the Pope of their own personal infallibility, their

[1] *The Bible and the Child.*

attitude towards those who see that the old views are no longer tenable is an attitude of anger and alarm. This is the usual temper of the *odium theologicum*. It would, if it could, grasp the thumbscrew and the rack of mediæval Inquisitors, and would, in the last resource, hand over all opponents to the scaffold or the stake. Those whose intellects have thus been petrified by custom and advancing years are, of all others, the most hopeless to deal with. They have made themselves incapable of fair and rational examination of the truths which they impugn. They think that they can, by mere assertion, overthrow results arrived at by the lifelong inquiries of the ablest students, while they have not given a day's serious or impartial study to them. They fancy that even the ignorant, if only they be what is called "orthodox," are justified in strong denunciation of men quite as truthful, and often incomparably more able than themselves. Off-hand dogmatists of this stamp, who usually abound among professional religionists, think that they can refute any number of scholars, however profound and however pious, if only they shout "Infidel" with sufficient loudness.

Those are not the words of an "Infidel." They are the words of the late Dean Farrar.

To quote again from Dr. Gladden:

Evidently neither the theory of verbal inspiration, nor the theory of plenary inspiration, can be made to fit the facts which a careful study of the writings themselves brings before us. *These writings are not inspired in the sense which we have commonly given to that word.* The verbal theory of inspiration was only tenable while they were supposed to be the work of a single author. *To such a composite literature no such theory will apply.*

The Bible is not inspired. The fact is, that *no* "sacred" book is inspired. *All* "sacred" books are the work of human minds. All ideas of God are human ideas. All religions are made by man.

When the old-fashioned Christian said the Bible was an inspired book, he meant that God put the words and the facts directly into the mind of the prophet. That meant that God told Moses about the creation, Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Ark, and the Ten Commandments.

Many modern Christians, amongst whom I place the Rev. Ambrose Pope, of Bakewell, believe that God gave

Moses (and all the other prophets) a special genius, and a special desire to convey religious information to other men.

And Mr. Pope suggests that man was so ignorant, so childlike, or so weak in those days that it was necessary to disguise plain facts in misleading symbols.

But the man, Moses or another, who wrote the Book of Genesis was a man of literary genius. He was no child, no weakling. If God had said to him: "I made the world out of the fiery nebula, and I made the sea to bring forth the staple of life, and I caused all living things to develop from that seed or staple of life, and I drew man out from the brutes; and the time was six hundred millions of years." If God had said that to Moses, do you think Moses would not have understood?

Now, let me show you what the Christian asks us to believe. He asks us to believe that the God who was the first cause of creation, and knew everything, inspired man, in the childhood of the world, with a fabulous and inaccurate theory of the origin of man and the earth, and that since that day the same God has gradually changed or added to the inspiration, until He inspired Laplace, and Galileo, and Copernicus, and Darwin to contradict the teachings of the previous fifty thousand years. He asks us to believe that God muddled men's minds with a mysterious series of revelations cloaked in fable and allegory; that He allowed them to stumble and to blunder, and to quarrel over these "revelations"; that He allowed them to persecute, and slay, and torture each other on account of divergent readings of His "revelations" for ages and ages; and that He is still looking on while a number of bewildered and antagonistic religions fight each other to achieve the survival of the fittest. Is that a reasonable theory? Is it the kind of theory a reason-

able man can accept? Is it consonant with common sense.

Contrast that with our theory. We say that early man, having no knowledge of science, and more imagination than reason, would be alarmed and puzzled by the phenomena of nature. He would be afraid of the dark, he would be afraid of the thunder, he would wonder at the moon, at the stars, at fire, at the ocean. He would fear what he did not understand, and he would bow down and pay homage to what he feared.

Then, by degrees, he would personify the stars, and the sun, and the thunder, and the fire. He would make gods of these things. He would make gods of the dead. He would make gods of heroes. And he would do what all savage races do, what all children do: he would make legends, or fables, or fairy tales, out of his hopes, his fears, and his guesses.

Does not that sound reasonable? Does not history teach us that it is true? Do we not know that religion was so born and nursed?

There is no such thing known to men as an original religion. All religions are made up of the fables and the imaginations of tribes long since extinct. Religion is an evolution, not a revelation. It has been invented, altered, and built up, and pulled down, and reconstructed, time after time. It is a conglomeration and an adaptation, as language is. And the Christian religion is no more an orignal religion than English is an original tongue. We have Sanscrit, Latin, Greek, French, Saxon, Norman words in our language; and we have Aryan, Semitic, Egyptian, Roman, Greek, and all manner of ancient foreign fables, myths, and rites in our Christian religion.

We say that Genesis was a poetic presentation of a

fabulous story pieced together from many traditions of many tribes, and recording with great literary power the ideas of a people whose scientific knowledge was very incomplete.

Now, I ask you which of these theories is the most reasonable; which is the most scientific; which agrees most closely with the facts of philology and of history of which we are in possession?

Why twist the self-evident fact that the Bible story of creation was the work of unscientific men of strong imagination, into a far-fetched and unsatisfactory puzzle of symbol and allegory? It would be just as easy and just as reasonable to take the *Morte d'Arthur* and try to prove that it contained a veiled revelation of God's relations to man.

And let me ask one or two questions as to this matter of the revelation of the Holy Bible. Is God all-powerful, or is He not? If He is all-powerful, why did He make man so imperfect? Could He not have created him at once a wise and good creature? Even when man was ignorant and savage, could not an all-powerful God have devised some means of revealing Himself so as to be understood? If God really wished to reveal Himself to man, why did He reveal Himself only to one or two obscure tribes, and leave the rest of mankind in darkness?

Those poor savages were full of credulity, full of terror, full of wonder, full of the desire to worship. They worshiped the sun and the moon; they worshiped ghosts and demons; they worshiped tyrants, and pretenders, and heroes, dead and alive. Do you believe that if God had come down on earth, with a cohort of shining angels, and had said, "Behold, I am the only God," these savages would not have left all baser gods, and worshiped Him? Why, these men, and all the thousands

of generations of their children, have been looking for God since first they learned to look at sea and sky. They are looking for Him now. They have fought countless bloody wars, and have committed countless horrible atrocities in their zeal for Him. And you ask us to believe that His grand revelation of Himself is bound up in a volume of fables and errors collected thousands of years ago by superstitious priests and prophets of Palestine, and Egypt, and Assyria.

We cannot believe such a statement. No man can believe it who tests it by his reason in the same way in which he would test any modern problem. If the leaders of religion brought the same vigor and subtlety of mind to bear upon religion which they bring to bear upon any criticism of religion, if they weighed the Bible as they have weighed astronomy and evolution, the Christian religion would not last a year.

If my reader has not studied this matter, let him read the books I have recommended, and then sit down and consider the Bible revelation and story with the same fearless honesty and clear common sense with which he would consider the Bibles of the Mohammedan, or Buddhist, or Hindoo, and then ask himself the question: "Is the Bible a holy and inspired book, and the word of God to man, or is it an incongruous and contradictory collection of tribal traditions and ancient fables, written by men of genius and imagination?"

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BIBLE

We now reach the second stage in our examination, which is the claim that no religion known to man can be truly said to be original. All religions, the Christian religion included, are adaptations or variants of older religions. Religions are not *revealed:* they are *evolved.*

If a religion were revealed by God, that religion would be perfect in whole and in part, and would be as perfect at the first moment of its revelation as after ten thousand years of practice. There has never been a religion which fulfills those conditions.

According to Bible chronology, Adam was created some six thousand years ago. Science teaches that man existed during the glacial epoch, which was at least fifty thousand years before the Christian era.

Here I recommend the study of Laing's *Human Origins,* Parsons' *Our Sun God,* Sayce's *Ancient Empires of the East,* and Frazer's *Golden Bough.*

In his visitation charge at Blackburn, in July, 1889, the Bishop of Manchester spoke as follows:

> Now, if these dates are accepted, to what age of the world shall we assign that Accadian civilization and literature which so long preceded Sargo I and the statutes of Sirgullah? I can best answer you in the words of the great Assyriologist, F. Hommel: "If," he says, "the Semites were already settled in Northern Babylonia (Accad) in the beginning of the fourth thousand B. C., in possession of the fully developed Shumiro-Accadian culture adopted by them — a culture, moreover, which appears to have sprouted like a cutting from Shumir, then the latter must be far, far older still, and have existed in its *completed* form in the fifth thousand B. C., an age to which I unhesitatingly ascribe the South Babylonian incantations." . . . Who does not see that such facts as these compel us to remodel our whole idea of the past?

A culture which was *complete* one thousand years before Adam must have needed many thousands of years to develop. It would be a modest guess that Accadian culture implied a growth of at least ten thousand years.

Of course, it may be said that the above biblical error is only an error of time, and has no bearing on the alleged evolution of the Bible. Well, an error of a million, or of ten thousand, years is a serious thing in a divine revelation; but, as we shall see, it *has* a bearing on evolution. Because it appears that in that ancient Accadian civilization lie the seeds of many Bible laws and legends.

Here I quote from *Our Sun God,* by Mr. J. D. Parsons:

> To commence with, it is well known to those acquainted with the remains of the Assyrian and Babylonian civilizations, that the stories of the creation, the temptation, the fall, the deluge, and the confusion of tongues, were the common property of the Babylonians centuries before the date of the alleged Exodus under Moses. . . . Even the word Sabbath is Babylonian. And the observance of the seventh day as a Sabbath, or day of rest, by the Accadians thousands of years before Moses, or Israel, or even Abraham, or Adam himself could have been born or created, is admitted by, among others, the Bishop of Manchester. For in an address to his clergy, already mentioned, he let fall these pregnant words:
>
> "Who does not see that such facts as these compel us to remodel our whole idea of the past, and that in particular to affirm that the Sabbatical institution originated in the time of Moses, three thousand five hundred years after it is probable that it existed in Chaldæa, is an impossibility, no matter how many Fathers of the Church have asserted it. Facts cannot be dismissed like theories."

The Sabbath, then, is one link in the evolution of the Bible. Like the legends of the Creation, the Fall, and the Flood, it was adopted by the Jews from the Babylonians during or after the Captivity.

Of the Flood, Professor Sayce, in his *Ancient Empires of the East,* speaks as follows:

With the Deluge the mythical history of Babylonia takes a new departure. From this event to the Persian conquest was a period of 36,000 years, or an astronomical cycle called *saros*. Xisuthros, with his family and friends, alone survived the waters which drowned the rest of mankind on account of their sins. He had been ordered by the gods to build a ship, to pitch it within and without, and to stock it with animals of every species. Xisuthros sent out first a dove, then a swallow, and lastly a raven, to discover whether the earth was dry; the dove and the swallow returned to the ship, and it was only when the raven flew away that the rescued hero ventured to leave his ark. He found that he had been stranded on the peak of the mountain of Nizir, "the mountain of the world," whereon the Accadians believed the heavens to rest — where, too, they placed the habitations of their gods, and the cradle of their own race. Since Nizir lay amongst the mountains of Pir Mam, a little south of Rowandiz, its mountain must be identified with Rowandiz itself. On its peak Xisuthros offered sacrifices, piling up cups of wine by sevens; and the rainbow, "the glory of Anu," appeared in the heaven, in covenant that the world should never again be destroyed by flood. Immediately afterwards Xisuthros and his wife, like the biblical Enoch, were translated to the regions of the blest beyond Datilla, the river of Death, and his people made their way westward to Sippara. Here they disinterred the books buried by their late ruler before the Deluge took place, and re-established themselves in their old country under the government first of Erèkhoos, and then of his son Khoniasbolos. Meanwhile, other colonists had arrived in the plain of Sumer, and here, under the leadership of the giant Etana, called Titan by the Greek writers, they built a city of brick, and essayed to erect a tower by means of which they might scale the sky, and so win for themselves the immortality granted to Xisuthros. . . . But the tower was overthrown in the night by the winds, and Bel frustrated their purpose by confounding their language, and scattering them on the mound.

These legends of the Flood and the Tower of Babel were obviously borrowed by the Jews during their Babylonian captivity.

Professor Sayce, in his *Ancient Empires of the East*, speaking of the Accadian king, Sargon I., says:

Legends naturally gathered round the name of this Babylonian Solomon. Not only was he entitled "the deviser of law, the deviser of prosperity," but it was told of him how his father had died while he was still unborn, how his mother had fled to the mountains, and there left him, like a second Moses, to the care of the river in an ark of reeds and bitumen; and how he was saved by Accir, "the water-drawer," who brought him

up as his own son, until the time came when, under the protection of Istar, his rank was discovered, and he took his seat on the throne of his forefathers.

From Babylon the Jews borrowed the legends of Eden, of the Fall, the Flood, the Tower of Babel; from Babylon they borrowed the Sabbath, and very likely the Commandments; and is it not possible that the legendary Moses and the legendary Sargon may be variants of a still more ancient mythical figure?

Compare Sayce with the following "Notes on the Moses Myth," from *Christianity and Mythology,* by J. M. Robertson:

Notes on the Moses Myth

I have been challenged for saying that the story of Moses and the floating basket is a variant of the myth of Horos and the floating island (*Herod.* ii. 156). But this seems sufficiently proved by the fact that in the reign of Rameses II, according to the monuments, there was a place in Middle Egypt which bore the name I-en-Moshé, "*the island of Moses.*" That is the primary meaning. Brugsch, who proclaims the fact (*Egypt under the Pharaohs,* ii, 117), suggests that it can also mean "the river bank of Moses." It is very obvious, however, that the Egyptians would not have named a place by a real incident in the life of a successful enemy, as Moses is represented in Exodus. Name and story are alike mythological and pre-Hebraic, though possibly Semitic. The Assyrian myth of Sargon, which is, indeed, very close to the Hebrew, may be the oldest form of all; but the very fact that the Hebrews located their story in Egypt shows that they knew it to have a home there in some fashion. The name Moses, whether it mean "the water-child" (so Deutsch) or "the hero" (Sayce, *Hib. Lect. p.* 46), was in all likelihood an epithet of Horos. The basket, in the latter form, was doubtless an adaptation from the ritual of the basket-born God-Child, as was the birth story of Jesus. In Diodorus Siculus (i. 25) the myth runs that Isis found Horos *dead* "on the water," and brought him to life again; but even in that form the clue to the Moses birth-myth is obvious. And there are yet other Egyptian connections for the Moses saga, since the Egyptians had a myth of Thoth (their Logos) having slain Argus (as did Hermes), and having had to fly for it to Egypt, where he gave laws and learning to the Egyptians. Yet, curiously enough, this myth probably means that the Sun-God, who has in the other story escaped the "massacre of the inno-

cents" (the morning stars), now plays the slayer on his own account, since the slaying of many-eyed Argus probably means the extinction of the stars by the morning sun (cp. Emériс-David, *Introduction,* end). Another "Hermes" was son of Nilus, and his name was sacred (Cicero, *De Nat. Deor. iii, 22, cp.* 16). The story of the floating child, finally, becomes part of the lore of Greece. In the myth of Apollo, the Babe-God and his sister Artemis are secured in float-islands.

It is impossible to form a just estimate of the Bible without some knowledge of ancient history and comparative mythology. It would be impossible for me to go deeply into these matters in this small book, but I will quote a few significant passages, just to show the value of such historical evidence. Here, to begin with, are some passages from Mr. Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God:*

The Origin of Gods

Mr. Herbert Spencer has traced so admirably, in his *Principles of Sociology,* the progress of development from the Ghost to the God that I do not propose in this chapter to attempt much more than a brief recapitulation of his main propositions, which, however, I shall supplement with fresh examples, and adapt at the same time to the conception of three successive stages in human ideas about the Life of the Dead, as set forth in the preceding argument.

In the earliest stage of all — the stage where the actual bodies of the dead are preserved — Gods as such are for the most part unknown: it is the corpses of friends and ancestors that are worshiped and reverenced. For example, Ellis says of the corpse of a Tahitian chief, that it was placed in a sitting posture under a protecting shed; "a small altar was erected before it, and offerings of fruit, food, and flowers were daily presented by the relatives, or the priest appointed to attend the body." (This point about the priest is of essential importance.) The Central Americans, again, as Mr. Spencer notes, performed similar rites before bodies dried by artificial heat. The New Guinea people, as D'Albertis found, worship the dried mummies of their fathers and husbands. A little higher in the scale, we get the developed mummy-worship of Egypt and Peru, which survives even after the evolution of greater gods, from powerful kings or chieftains. Wherever the actual bodies of the dead are preserved, there also worship and offerings are paid to them.

Often, however, as already noted, it is not the whole body,

but the head alone, that is specially kept and worshiped. Thus Mr. H. O. Forbes says of the people of Buru: "The dead are buried in the forest in some secluded spot, marked by a *merang*, or grave-pole, over which at certain intervals the relatives place tobacco, cigarettes, and various offerings. When the body is decomposed, the son or nearest relative disinters the head, wraps a new cloth about it, and places it in the Matakau at the back of his house, or in a little hut erected for it near the grave. It is the representative of his forefathers, whose behests he holds in the greatest respect."

Two points are worthy of notice in this interesting account, as giving us an anticipatory hint of two further accessories whose evolution we must trace hereafter: first, the grave-stake, which is probably the origin of the wooden idol; the second, the little hut erected over the head by the side of the grave, which is undoubtedly one of the origins of the temple, or praying-house. Observe, also, the ceremonial wrapping of the skull in cloth and its oracular functions.

Throughout the earlier and ruder phases of human evolution this primitive conception of ancestors or dead relatives as the chief known objects of worship survives undiluted: and ancestor-worship remains to this day the principal religion of the Chinese and of several other peoples. Gods, as such, are practically unknown in China. Ancestor-worship, also, survives in many other races as one of the main cults, even after other elements of later religion have been superimposed upon it. In Greece and Rome it remained to the last an important part of domestic ritual. But in most cases a gradual differentiation is set up in time between various classes of ghosts or dead persons, some ghosts being considered of more importance and power than others; and out of these last it is that gods as a rule are finally developed. A god, in fact, is in the beginning, at least, an exceptionally powerful and friendly ghost — a ghost able to help, and from whose help great things may reasonably be expected.

Again, the rise of chieftainship and kingship has much to do with the growth of a higher conception of godhead; a dead king of any great power or authority is sure to be thought of in time as a god of considerable importance. We shall trace out this idea more fully hereafter in the religion of Egypt; for the present it must suffice to say that the supposed power of the gods in each pantheon has regularly increased in proportion to the increased power of kings or emperors.

When we pass from the first plane of corpse preservation and mummification to the second plane, where burial is habitual, it might seem, at a hasty glance, as though continued worship of the dead, and their elevation into gods, would no longer be possible. For we saw that burial is prompted by a deadly fear lest the corpse or ghost should return to plague the living. Nevertheless, natural affection for parents or friends, and the desire to insure their goodwill and aid, make these seemingly contrary ideas reconcilable. As a matter of fact, we find that

even when men bury or burn their dead, they continue to worship them; while, as we shall show in the sequel, even the great stones which they roll on top of the grave to prevent the dead from rising again become, in time, altars on which sacrifices are offered to the spirit.

Much of the Bible is evidently legendary. Here we have a jumble of ancient myths, allegories, and mysteries drawn from many sources and remote ages, and adapted, altered, and edited so many times that in many instances their original or inner meaning has become obscure. And it is folly to accept the tangled legends and blurred or distorted symbols as the literal history of a literal tribe, and the literal account of the origin of man, and the genesis of religion.

The real roots of religion lie far deeper: deeper, perhaps, than sun-worship, ghost-worship, and fear of demons. In *The Real Origin of Religion* occurs the following:

Quite recently theories have been advocated attempting to prove that the minds of early men were chiefly concerned with the increase of vegetation, and that their fancy played so much round the mysteries of plant growth that they made them their holiest arcana. Hence it appears that the savages were far more modest and refined than our civilized contemporaries, for almost all our works of imagination, both in literature and art, make human love their theme in all its aspects, whether healthy or pathological; whereas the savage, it seems, thought only of his crops. Nothing can be more astonishing than this discovery, if it be true, but there are many facts which might lead us to believe that the romance of love inspired early art and religion as well as modern thought.

And again:

Religion is a gorgeous efflorescence of human love. The tender passion has left its footsteps on the sands of time in magnificent monuments and libraries of theology.

This may seem startling to many orthodox readers, but it is no new theory, and is doubtless quite true, for all gods have been made by man, and all theologies have

been evolved by man, and the odor and the color of his human passions cling to them always, even after they are discarded. Under all man's dreams of eternal gods and eternal heavens lies man's passion for the eternal feminine. But on these subjects "Moses" spoke in parables, and I shall not speak at all.

Mr. Robertson, in *Christianity and Mythology,* says of the Bible:

> It is a medley of early metaphysics and early fable — early, that is, relatively to known Hebrew history. It ties together two creation stories and two flood stories; it duplicates several sets of mythic personages — as Cain and Abel, Tubal-Cain and Jabal; it grafts the curse of Cham on the curse of Cain, making that finally the curse of Canaan; it tells the same offensive story twice of one patriarch, and again of another; it gives an early "metaphysical" theory of the origin of death, life, and evil; it adapts the Egyptian story of the "Two Brothers," or the myth of Adonis, as the history of Joseph; it makes use of various God-names, pretending that they always stood for the same deity; it repeats traditions concerning mythic founders of races — if all this be not "a medley of early fable," what is it?

I quote next from *The Bible and the Child,* in which Dean Farrar says:

> Some of the books of Scripture are separated from others by the interspace of a thousand years. They represent the fragmentary survival of Hebrew literature. They stand on very different levels of value, and even of morality. Read for centuries in an otiose, perfunctory, slavish, and superstitious manner, they have often been so egregiously misunderstood that many entire systems of interpretation — which were believed in for generations, and which fill many folios, now consigned to a happy oblivion — are clearly proved to have been utterly baseless. Colossal usurpations of deadly import to the human race have been built, like inverted pyramids, on the narrow apex of a single misinterpreted text.

Compare those utterances of the freethinker and the divine, and then read the following words of Dean Farrar:

> The manner in which the Higher Criticism has slowly and surely made its victorious progress, in spite of the most determined and exacerbated opposition, is a strong argument in its

favor. It is exactly analogous to the way in which the truths of astronomy and of geology have triumphed over universal opposition. They were once anathematized as "infidel"; they are now accepted as axiomatic. I cannot name a single student or professor of any eminence in Great Britain who does not accept, with more or less modification, the main conclusions of the German school of critics.

This being the case, I ask, as a mere layman, what right has the Bible to usurp the title of "the word of God"? What evidence can be sharked up to show that it is any more a holy or an inspired book than any book of Thomas Carlyle's, or John Ruskin's, or William Morris'? What evidence is forthcoming that the Bible is true?

THE UNIVERSE ACCORDING TO ANCIENT RELIGION AND MODERN SCIENCE

The theory of the early Christian Church was that the Earth was flat, like a plate, and the sky was a solid dome above it, like an inverted blue basin.

The Sun revolved round the Earth to give light by day, the Moon revolved round the Earth to give light by night. The stars were auxiliary lights, and had all been specially, and at the same time, created for the good of man.

God created the Sun, Moon, Stars, and Earth in six days. He created them by word, and He created them out of nothing.

The center of the Universe was the Earth. The Sun was made to give light to the Earth by day, and the Moon to give light to Earth by night.

Any man who denied that theory in those days was in danger of being murdered as an Infidel.

To-day our ideas are very different. Hardly any educated man or woman in the world believes that the world is flat, or that the Sun revolves round the Earth, or that what we call the sky is a solid substance, like a domed ceiling.

Advanced thinkers, even amongst the Christians, believe that the world is round, that it is one of a series of planets revolving round the Sun, that the Sun is only one of many millions of other suns, that these suns were not created simultaneously, but at different periods, probably separated by millions or billions of years.

We have all, Christians and Infidels alike, been obliged to acknowledge that the Earth is not the center of the whole Universe, but only a minor planet revolving around and dependent upon, one of myriads of suns.

God, called by Christians " Our Heavenly Father," created all things. He created not only the world, but the whole universe. He is all-wise, He is all-powerful, He is all-loving, and He is revealed to us in the Scriptures.

Let us see. Let us try to imagine what kind of a God the creator of this Universe would be, and let us compare him with the God, or Gods, revealed to us in the Bible, and in the teachings of the Church.

We have seen the account of the Universe and its creation, as given in the revealed Scriptures. Let us now take a hasty view of the Universe and its creation as revealed to us by science.

What is the Universe like, as far as our limited knowledge goes?

Our Sun is only one sun amongst many millions. Our planet is only one of eight which revolve around him.

Our Sun, with his planets and comets, comprises what is known as the solar system.

There is no reason to suppose that this is the only Solar System: there may be many millions of solar systems. For aught we know, there may be millions of systems, each containing millions of solar systems.

Let us deal first with the solar system of which we are a part.

The Sun is a globe of 866,200 miles diameter. His diameter is more than 108 times that of the Earth. His volume is 1,305,000 times the volume of the Earth. All the eight planets added together only make one-seven-hundredth part of his weight. His circumference is more than two and a half millions of miles. He revolves upon

his axis in 25¼ days, or at a speed of nearly 4000 miles an hour.

This immense and magnificent globe diffuses heat and light to all the other planets.

Without the light and heat of the Sun no life would now be, or in the past have been, possible on this Earth, or any other planet of the solar system.

The eight planets of the solar system are divided into four inferior and four superior.

The inferior planets are Mercury, Venus, the Earth, and Mars. The superior are Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, and Neptune.

The diameters of the smaller planets are as follow: Mercury, 3008 miles; Mars, 5000 miles; Venus, 7480 miles; the Earth, 7926 miles.

The diameters of the large planets are: Jupiter, 88,439 miles; Saturn, 75,036 miles; Neptune, 37,205 miles; Uranus, 30,875 miles.

The volume of Jupiter is 1389 times, of Saturn 848 times, of Neptune 103 times, and of Uranus 59 times the volume of the Earth.

The mean distances from the Sun are: Mercury, 36 million miles; Venus, 67 million miles; the Earth, 93 million miles; Mars, 141 million miles; Jupiter, 483 million miles; Saturn, 886 million miles; Uranus, 1782 million miles; Neptune, 2792 million miles.

To give an idea of the meaning of these distances, I may say that a train traveling night and day at 60 miles an hour would take quite 176 years to come from the Sun to the Earth.

The same train, at the same speed, would be 5280 years in traveling from the Sun to Neptune.

Reckoning that Neptune is the outermost planet of the

solar system, that system would have a diameter of 5584 millions of miles.

If we made a chart of the solar system on a scale of 1 inch to a million miles, we should need a sheet of paper 465 feet 4 inches wide. On this sheet the Sun would have a diameter of less than 1 inch, and the Earth would be about the size of a pin-prick.

If an express train, going at 60 miles an hour, had to travel round the Earth's orbit, it would be more than 1000 years on the journey. If the Earth moved no faster, our winter would last more than 250 years. But in the solar system the speeds are as wonderful as the sizes. The Earth turns upon its axis at the rate of 1000 miles an hour, and travels in its orbit round the Sun at the rate of more than 1000 miles a minute, or 66,000 miles an hour.

So much for the size of the solar system. It consists of a Sun and eight planets, and the outer planet's orbit is one of 5584 millions of miles in diameter, which it would take an express train, at 60 miles an hour, 10,560 years to cross.

But this distance is as nothing when we come to deal with the distances of the other stars from our Sun.

The distance from our Sun to the nearest fixed (?) star is more than 20 millions of millions of miles. Our express train, which crosses the diameter of the solar system in 10,560 years, would take, if it went 60 miles an hour day and night, about 40 million years to reach the nearest fixed star from the Sun.

And if we had to mark the nearest fixed star on our chart made on a scale of 1 inch to the million miles, we should find that whereas a sheet of 465 feet would take in the outermost planet of the solar system, a sheet to take in

the nearest fixed star would have to be about 620 miles wide. On this sheet, as wide as from London to Inverness, the Sun would be represented by a dot three-quarters of an inch in diameter, and the Earth by a pin-prick.

But these immense distances only relate to the *nearest* stars. Now, the nearest stars are about four "light years" distant from us. That is to say, that light, traveling at a rate of about 182,000 miles in *one second,* takes four years to come from the nearest fixed star to the Earth.

But I have seen the distance from the Earth to the Great Nebula in Orion given as *a thousand light years,* or 250 times the distance of the fixed star above alluded to.

To reach that nebula at 60 miles an hour, an express train would have to travel for 35 millions of years multiplied by 250 — that is to say, for 8750 million years.

And yet there are millions of stars whose distances are even greater than the distance of the Great Nebula in Orion.

How many stars are there? No one can even guess. But L. Struve estimates the number of those visible to the great telescopes at 20 millions.

Twenty millions of suns. And as for the size of these suns, Sir Robert Ball says Sirius is ten times as large as our Sun; and a well-known astronomer, writing in the *English Mechanic* about a week ago, remarks that Alpha Orionis (Betelgenze) has probably 700 times the light of our Sun.

Looking through my telescope, which is only 3-inch aperture, I have seen star clusters of wonderful beauty in the Pleïades and in Cancer. There is, in the latter constellation, a dim star which, when viewed through my

glass, becomes a constellation larger, more brilliant, and more beautiful than Orion or the Great Bear. I have looked at these jeweled sun-clusters many a time, and wondered over them. But I have never once thought of believing that they were specially created to be lesser lights to the Earth.

And now let me quote from that grand book of Richard A. Proctor's, *The Expanse of Heaven,* a fine passage descriptive of some of the wonders of the "Milky Way":

> There are stars in all orders of brightness, from those which (seen with the telescope) resemble in luster the leading glories of the firmament, down to tiny points of light only caught by momentary twinklings. Every variety of arrangement is seen. Here the stars are scattered as over the skies at night; there they cluster in groups, as though drawn together by some irresistible power; in one region they seem to form sprays of stars like diamonds sprinkled over fern leaves; elsewhere they lie in streams and rows, in coronets and loops and festoons, resembling the star festoon which, in the constellation Perseus, garlands the black robe of night. Nor are varieties of color wanting to render the display more wonderful and more beautiful. Many of the stars which crowd upon the view are red, orange, and yellow. Among them are groups of two and three and four (multiple stars as they are called), amongst which blue and green and lilac and purple stars appear, forming the most charming contrast to the ruddy and yellow orbs near which they are commonly seen.

Millions and millions — countless millions of suns. Innumerable galaxies and systems of suns, separated by black gulfs of space so wide that no man can realize the meaning of the figures which denote their stretch. Suns

of fire and light, whirling through vast oceans of space like swarms of golden bees. And round them planets whirling at thousands of miles a minute.

And on Earth there are forms of life so minute that millions of them exist in a drop of water. There are microscopic creatures more beautiful and more highly finished than any gem, and more complex and effective than the costliest machine of human contrivance. In *The Story of Creation* Mr. Ed. Clodd tells us that one cubic inch of rotten stone contains 41 thousand million vegetable skeletons of diatoms.

I cut the following from a London morning paper:

> It was discovered some few years ago that a peculiar bacillus was present in all persons suffering from typhoid, and in all foods and drinks which spread the disease. Experiments were carried out, and it was assumed, not without good reason, that the bacillus was the primary cause of the malady, and it was accordingly labeled the typhoid bacillus.
>
> But the bacteriologists further discovered that the typhoid bacillus was present in water which was not infectious, and in persons who were not ill, or had never been ill, with typhoid.
>
> So now a theory is propounded that a healthy typhoid bacillus does not cause typhoid, but that it is only when the bacillus is itself sick of a fever, or, in other words, is itself the prey of some infinitely minuter organisms, which feed on it alone, that it works harm to mortal men.

The bacillus is so small that one requires a powerful microscope to see him, and his blood may be infested with bacilli as small to him as he is to us.

And there are millions, and more likely billions, of suns!

Talk about Aladdin's palace, Sinbad's valley of diamonds, Macbeth's witches, or the Irish fairies! How petty are their exploits, how tawdry are their splendors, how paltry are their riches, when we compare them to the romance of science.

When did a poet conceive an idea so vast and so as-

tounding as the theory of evolution? What are a few paltry lumps of crystallized carbon compared to a galaxy of a million million suns? Did any Eastern inventor of marvels ever suggest such a human feat as that accomplished by the men who have, during the last handful of centuries, spelt out the mystery of the universe? These scientists have worked miracles before which those of the ancient priests and magicians are mere tricks of hanky-panky.

Look at the romance of geology; at the romance of astronomy; at the romance of chemistry; at the romance of the telescope, and the microscope, and the prism. More wonderful than all, consider the story of how flying atoms in space became suns, how suns made planets, how planets changed from spheres of flame and raging fiery storm to worlds of land and water. How in the water specks of jelly became fishes, fishes reptiles, reptiles mammals, mammals monkeys, monkeys men; until, from the fanged and taloned cannibal, roosting in a forest, have developed art and music, religion and science; and the children of the jellyfish can weigh the suns, measure the stellar spaces, ride on the ocean or in the air, and speak to each other from continent to continent.

Talk about fairy tales! what is this? You may look through a telescope, and see the nebula that is to make a sun floating, like a luminous mist, three hundred million miles away. You may look again, and see another sun in process of formation. You may look again, and see others almost completed. You may look again and again, and see millions of suns and systems spread out across the heavens like rivers of living gems.

You will say that all this speaks of a Creator. I shall not contradict you. But what kind of Creator must He be who has created such a universe as this?

Do you think He is the kind of Creator to make blunders and commit crimes? Can you, after once thinking of the Milky Way, with its rivers of suns, and the drop of water teeming with spangled dragons, and the awful abysses of dark space, through which comets shoot at a speed a thousand times as fast as an express train — can you, after seeing Saturn's rings, and Jupiter's moons, and the clustered gems of Hercules, consent for a moment to the allegation that the creator of all this power and glory got angry with men, and threatened them with scabs and sores, and plagues of lice and frogs? Can you suppose that such a creator would, after thousands of years of effort, have failed even now to make His repeated revelations comprehensible? Do you believe that He would be driven across the unimaginable gulfs of space, out of the transcendent glory of His myriad resplendent suns, to die on a cross, in order to win back to Him the love of the puny creatures on one puny planet in the marvelous universe His power had made?

Do you believe that the God who imagined and created such a universe could be petty, base, cruel, revengeful, and capable of error? I do not believe it.

And now let us examine the character and conduct of this God as depicted for us in the Bible — the book which is alleged to have been directly revealed by God Himself.

JEHOVAH

The Adopted Heavenly Father of Christianity

In giving the above brief sketch of the known universe my object was to suggest that the Creator of a universe of such scope and grandeur must be a Being of vast power and the loftiest dignity.

Now, the Christians claim that their God created this universe — not the universe He is described, in His own inspired word, as creating, but the universe revealed by science; the universe of twenty millions of suns.

And the Christians claim that this God is a God of love, a God omnipotent, omnipresent, and eternal.

And the Christians claim that this great God, the Creator of our wonderful universe, is the God revealed to us in the Bible.

Let us, then, go to the Bible, and find out for ourselves whether the God therein revealed is any more like the ideal Christian God, than the universe therein revealed is like the universe since discovered by man without the aid of divine inspiration.

As for the biblical God, Jahweh, or Jehovah, I shall try to show from the Bible itself that He was not all-wise, nor all-powerful nor omnipresent; that He was not merciful nor just; but that, on the contrary, He was fickle, jealous, dishonorable, immoral, vindictive, barbarous, and cruel.

Neither was He, in any sense of the words, great nor good. But, in fact, He was a tribal god, an idol, made

by man; and, as the idol of a savage and ignorant tribe, was Himself a savage and ignorant monster.

First, then, as to my claim that Jahweh, or Jehovah, was a tribal god. I shall begin by quoting from *Shall We Understand the Bible?* by the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams:

The theology of the Jahwist is very childish and elementary, though it is not all on the same level. He thinks of God very much as in human form, holding intercourse with men almost as one of themselves. His document begins with Genesis ii, 4, and its first portion continues, without break, to the end of chapter iv. This portion contains the story of Eden. Here Jahew *molds* dust into human form, and *breathes* into it; *plants* a garden, and puts the man in it. Jahweh comes to the man in his sleep, and takes part of his body to make a woman, and so skillfully, apparently, that the man never wakes under the operation. Jahweh *walks* in the garden like a man in the cool of the day. He even *makes coats* for Adam and Eve. Further on the Jahwist has a flood story, in which Jahweh *repents* that he had made man, and decides to drown him, saving only one family. When all is over, and Noah sacrifices on his new altar, Jahweh *smells* a sweet savor, just as a hungry man smells welcome food. When men build the Tower of Babel, Jahweh *comes* down to see it — he cannot see it from where he is. In Genesis xviii the Jahwist tells a story of three men coming to Abraham's tent. Abraham gives them water to wash their feet, and bread to eat, and Sarah makes cakes for them, and "they did eat"; altogether, they seemed to have had a nice time. As the story goes on, he leaves you to infer that one of these was Jahweh himself. It is J. who describes the story of Jacob *wrestling* with some mysterious person, who, by inference, is Jahweh. He tells a very strange story in Exodus iv, 24, that when Moses was returning into Egypt, at Jahweh's own request, Jahweh met him at a lodging-place, and sought to kill him. In Exodus xiv, 15, it is said Jahweh took the wheels off the chariots of the Egyptians. If we wanted to believe that such statements were true at all, we should resort to the device of saying they were figurative. But J. meant them literally. The Jahwist would have no difficulty in thinking of God in this way. The story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah belongs to this same document, in which, you remember, Jahweh says: "I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not, I will know" (Gen. xviii, 21). That God was omniscient and omnipresent had never occurred to the Jahwist. Jahweh, like a man, had to go and see if he wanted to know. There is, however, some compensation in the fact that he can move about without difficulty — he can come

down and go up. One might say, perhaps, that in J., though Jahweh cannot *be* everywhere, he can go to almost any place. All this is just like a child's thought. The child, at Christmas, can believe that, though Santa Claus cannot be everywhere, he can move about with wonderful facility, and, though he is a man, he is rather mysterious. The Jahwist's thought of God represents the childhood stage of the national life.

Later, Mr. Williams writes:

All this shows that at one time Jahweh was one of many Gods; other gods were real gods. The Israelites themselves believed, for example, that Chemosh was as truly the god of the Moabites as Jahweh was theirs, and they speak of Chemosh giving territory to his people to inherit, just as Jahweh had given them territory (Judg. xi. 24).

Just as a King of Israel would speak of Jahweh, the King of Moab speaks of Chemosh. His god sends him to battle. If he is defeated, the god is angry; if he succeeds, the god is favorable. And we have seen that there was a time when the Israelite believed Chemosh to be as real for Moab as Jahweh for himself. You find the same thing everywhere. The old Assyrian kings said exactly the same thing of the god Assur.

Assur sent them to battle, gave defeat or victory, as he thought fit. The history, however, is very obscure up to the time of Samuel, and uncertain for some time after. Samuel organized a Jahweh party. David worshiped Jahweh only, though he regards it as possible to be driven out of Jahweh's inheritance into that of other gods (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). Solomon was not exclusively devoted to Jahweh, for he built places of worship for other deities as well.

In the chapter on "Different Conceptions of Providence in the Bible" Mr. Williams says:

I have asked you to read Judges iii. 15–30, iv. 17–24, v. 24–31. The first is the story of Ehud getting at Eglon, Israel's enemy, by deceit, and killing him — an act followed by a great slaughter of Moabites. The second is the story of Jael pretending to play the friend to Sisera, and then murdering him. The third is the eulogy of Jael for doing so, as "blessed above women," in the so-called Song of Deborah. Here, you see, Providence is only concerned with the fortunes of Israel; any deceit and any cruelty is right which brings success to this people. Providence is not concerned with morality; nor is it concerned with individuals, except as the individual serves or opposes Israel.

In these two chapters Mr. Williams shows that the early conception of God was a very low one, and that

it underwent considerable change. In fact, he says, with great candor and courage, that the early Bible conception of God is one which we cannot now accept.

With this I entirely agree. We cannot accept as the God of Creation this savage idol of an obscure tribe, and we have renounced Him, and are ashamed of Him, not because of any later divine revelation, but because mankind have become too enlightened, too humane, and too honorable to tolerate Jehovah.

And yet the Christian religion adopted Jehovah, and called upon its followers to worship and believe Him, on pain of torture, or death, or excommunication in this world, and of hell-fire in the world to come. It is astounding.

But lest the evidence offered by Mr. Williams should not be considered sufficient, I shall quote from another very useful book, *The Evolution of the Idea of God,* by the late Grant Allen. In this book Mr. Allen clearly traces the origins of the various ideas of God, and we hear of Jehovah again, as a kind of tribal stone idol, carried about in a box or ark. I will quote as fully as space permits:

> But Jahweh was an object of portable size, for, omitting for the present the descriptions in the Pentateuch — which seem likely to be of later date, and not too trustworthy, through their strenuous Jehovistic editing — he was carried from Shiloh in his ark to the front during the great battle with the Philistines at Ebenezer; and the Philistines were afraid, for they said, "A god is come into the camp." But when the Philistines captured the ark, the rival god, Dagon, fell down and broke in pieces — so Hebrew legend declared — before the face of Jahweh. After the Philistines restored the sacred object, it rested for a time at Kirjath-jearim till David, on the capture of Jerusalem from the Jebusites, went down to that place to bring up from thence the ark of the god; and as it went, on a new cart, they "played before Jahweh on all manner of instruments," and David himself "danced before Jahweh." . . . The children of Israel in early times carried about with them a tribal god, Jahweh, whose presence in their midst was intimately connected with a

certain ark or chest containing a stone object or objects. This chest was readily portable, and could be carried to the front in case of warfare. They did not know the origin of the object in the ark with certainty; but they regarded it emphatically as "Jahweh their god, which led them out of the land of Egypt." . . .

I do not see, therefore, how we can easily avoid the obvious inference that Jahweh, the god of the Hebrews, who later became sublimated and etherealized into the God of Christianity, was, in his origin, nothing more nor less than the ancestral sacred stone of the people of Israel, however sculptured, and, perhaps, in the very last resort of all, the unhewn monumental pillar of some early Semitic sheikh or chieftain.

It was, indeed, as the Rev. C. E. Beeby says, in his book *Creed and Life,* a sad mistake of St. Augustine to tack this tribal fetish in his box on to the Christian religion as the All-Father, and Creator of the Universe. For Jehovah was a savage war-god, and, as such, was impotent to save the tribe who worshiped him.

But let us look further into the accounts of this original God of the Christians, and see how he comported himself, and let us put our examples under separate heads; thus:

Jehovah's Anger

Jahweh's bad temper is constantly displayed in the Bible. Jahweh made a man, whom he supposed to be perfect. When the man turned bad on his hands, Jahweh was angry, and cursed him and his seed for thousands of years. This vindictive act is accepted by the Apostle Paul as a natural thing for a God of Love to do.

Jahweh, who had already cursed all the seed of Adam, was so angry about man's sin, in the time of Noah, that he decided to drown all the people on the earth except Noah's family, and not only that, but to drown nearly all the innocent animals as well.

When the children of Irsael, who had eaten nothing

but manna for forty years, asked Jahweh for a change of diet, Jahweh lost his temper again, and sent amongst them "fiery serpents," so that "much people of Israel died." But still the desire for other food remained, and the Jews wept for meat. Then the Lord ordered Moses to speak to the people as follows:

> . . . The Lord will give you flesh, and ye shall eat. Ye shall not eat one day, nor two days, nor five days, neither ten days nor twenty days: but even a whole month, until it come out of your nostrils, and it be loathsome unto you; because that ye have despised the Lord, which is among you, and have wept before Him, saying, Why came we forth out of Egypt?

Then Jahwah sent immense numbers of quails, and the people ate them, and the anger of their angry god came upon them in the act, and smote them with "a very great plague."

One more instance out of many. In the First Book of Samuel we are told that on the return of Jahweh in his ark from the custody of the Philistines some men of Bethshemesh looked into the ark. This made Jahweh so angry that he smote the people, and slew more than fifty thousand of them.

The Injustice of Jehovah

I have already instanced Jahweh's injustice in cursing the seed of Adam for Adam's sin, and in destroying the whole animal creation, except a selected few, because he was angry with mankind. In the Book of Samuel we are told that Jahweh sent three years' famine upon the whole nation because of the sins of Saul, and that his wrath was only appeased by the hanging in cold blood of seven of Saul's sons for the evil committed by their father.

In the Book of Joshua is the story of how Achan, having stolen some gold, was ordered to be burnt; and

how Joshua and the Israelites took "Achan, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had," and stoned them to death, and "burnt them with fire."

In the First Book of Chronicles the devil persuades David to take a census of Israel. And again Jahweh acted in blind wrath and injustice, for he sent a pestilence, which slew seventy thousand of the people for David's fault. *But David he allowed to live.*

In Samuel we learn how Jahweh, because of an attack upon the Israelites four hundred years before the time of speaking, ordered Saul to destroy the Amalekites, "man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass." And Saul did as he was directed; but because he spared King Agag, the Lord deprived him of the crown, and made David king in his stead.

The Immorality of Jehovah

In the Second Book of Chronicles Jehovah gets Ahab, King of Israel, killed by putting lies into the mouths of the prophets:

> And the Lord said, Who shall entice Ahab, king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.
>
> Then there came out a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will entice him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith?
>
> And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.

In Deuteronomy are the following orders as to conduct in war:

> When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the Lord thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive.

And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;

Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails;

And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.

And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shall let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

The children of Israel, having been sent out by Jahweh to punish the Midianites, "slew all the males." But Moses was wroth, because they had spared the women, and he ordered them to kill all the married women, and to take the single women "for themselves." The Lord allowed this brutal act — which included the murder of all the male children — to be consummated. There were sixteen thousand females spared, of which we are told that "the Lord's tribute was thirty and two."

The Cruelty of Jehovah

I could find in the Bible more instances of Jahweh's cruelty and barbarity and lack of mercy than I can find room for.

In Deuteronomy the Lord hardens the heart of Sihon, King of Hesbon, to resist the Jews, and then "utterly destroyed the men, women, and little ones of every city."

In Leviticus, Jahweh threatens that if the Israelites will not reform he will "walk contrary to them in fury, *and they shall eat the flesh of their own sons and daughters.*"

In Deuteronomy is an account of how Bashan was utterly destroyed, men, women, and children being slain.

In the same book occur the following passages: —

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them.

That is from chapter vii. In chapter xx. there are further instructions of a like horrible kind:

Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

But of the cities of these people, which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.

And here, in a long quotation, is an example of the mercy of **Jahweh**, and his faculty for cursing:

The Lord shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it.

The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish.

And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron.

The Lord shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed.

The Lord shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them; and shalt be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

And thy carcass shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away.

The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed.

The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: . . .

And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and

fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land: and he shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which the Lord thy God hath given thee.

And thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body, the flesh of thy sons and of thy daughters, which the Lord thy God hath given thee, in the siege, and in the straitness, wherewith thine enemies shall distress thee:

So that the man that is tender among you, and very delicate, his eye shall be evil towards his brother, and toward the wife of his bosom, and toward the remnant of his children which he shall leave. . . .

For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn into the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.

I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them.

They shall be burnt with hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction: I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust.

The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs.

I think I have quoted enough to show that what I say of the Jewish God Jehovah is based on fact. But I could, if needful, heap proof on proof, for the books of the Old Testament reek with blood, and are horrible with atrocities.

Now, consider, is the God of whom we have been reading a God of love? Is He the Father of Christ? Is He not rather the savage idol of a savage tribe?

Man and his gods: what a tragi-comedy it is. Man has never seen one of his gods, never heard the voice of one of his gods, does not know the shape, expression, or bearing of one of his gods. Yet man has cursed man, hated man, hunted man, tortured man, and murdered man, for the sake of shadows and fantasies of his own terror, or vanity, or desire. We tiny, vain feeblenesses, we fussy ephemera; we sting each other, hate each other, hiss at each other, for the sake of the monster gods of our own delirium. As we are whirled upon our spinning, glowing planet through the unfathomable spaces

where myriads of suns, like golden bees, gleam through the awful mystery of "the vast void night," what are the phantom gods to us? They are no more than the water-spouts on the ocean, or the fleeting shadows on the hills. But the man, and the woman, and the child, and the dog with its wistful eyes: these know us, touch us, appeal to us, love us, serve us, grieve us.

Shall we kill these, or revile them, or desert them, for the sake of the lurid ghost in the cloud, or the fetish in his box?

Do you think the bloodthirsty vindictive Jahweh, who prized nothing but his own aggrandizement, and slew or cursed all who offended him, is the Creator, the same who made the jewels of the Pleïades, and the resplendent mystery of the Milky Way?

Is this unspeakable monster, Jahweh, the Father of Christ? Is he the God who inspired Buddha, and Shakespeare, and Herschel, and Beethoven, and Darwin, and Plato, and Bach? No; not he. But in warfare and massacre, in rapine and in rape, in black revenge and deadly malice, in slavery, and polygamy, and the debasement of women; and in the pomps, vanities, and greeds of royalty, of clericalism, and of usury and barter — we may easily discern the influence of his ferocious and abominable personality. It is time to have done with this nightmare fetish of a murderous tribe of savages. We have no use for him. We have no criminal so ruthless nor so blood-guilty as he. He is not fit to touch our cities, imperfect as we are. The thought of him defiles and nauseates. We should think him too horrible and pitiless for a devil, this red-handed, black-hearted Jehovah of the Jews.

And yet: in the inspired Book, in the Holy Bible, this awful creature is still enshrined as "God the Father

Almighty." It is marvelous. It is beyond the comprehension of any man not blinded by superstition, not warped by prejudice and old-time convention. *This* the God of Heaven? *This* the Father of Christ? This the Creator of the Milky Way? No. He will not do. He is not big enough. He is not good enough. He is not clean enough. He is a spiritual nightmare: a bad dream born in savage minds of terror and ignorance and a tigerish lust for blood.

But if He is not the Most High, if He is not the Heavenly Father, if He is not the King of kings, the Bible is not an inspired book, and its claim to divine revelation will not stand.

THE HEROES OF THE BIBLE

CARLYLE said we might judge a people by their heroes. The heroes of the Bible, like the God of the Bible, are immoral savages. That is because the Bible is a compilation from the literature of savage and immoral tribes.

Had the Bible been the word of God we should have found in it a lofty and a pure ideal of God. We should not have found in it open approval — divine approval — of such unspeakable savages as Moses, David, Solomon, Jacob, and Lot.

Let us consider the lives of a few of the Bible heroes. We will begin with Moses.

We used to be taught in school that Moses was the meekest man the world has known: and we used to marvel.

It is written in the second chapter of Exodus thus:

> And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren.
>
> And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.
>
> And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me as thou killest the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known.

The meekest of men slays an Egyptian deliberately and in cold blood. It may be pleaded that the Egyptian was doing wrong; but the remarks of the Hebrew suggest

that even the countrymen of Moses looked upon his act of violence with disfavor.

But the meekness of Moses is further illustrated in the laws attributed to him, in which the death penalty is almost as common as it was in England in the Middle Ages.

Also, in the thirty-first chapter of Numbers we have the following story. The Lord commands Moses to "avenge the children of Israel of the Midianites," after which Moses is to die. Moses sends out an army:

> And they warred against the Midianites, as the Lord commanded Moses; and they slew all the males.
>
> And they slew the kings of Midian, besides the rest of them that were slain; namely, Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian: Balaam also the son of Beor they slew with the sword.
>
> And the children of Israel took all the women of Midian captives, and their little ones, and took the spoil of all their cattle, and all their flocks, and all their goods.
>
> And they burnt all their cities wherein they dwelt, and all their goodly castles, with fire.
>
> And they took all the spoil, and all the prey, both of men and of beasts. . . .
>
> And Moses was wroth with the officers of the host, with the captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, which came from the battle.
>
> And Moses said unto them, Have ye saved all the women alive?
>
> Behold, these called the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord.
>
> Now therefore kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman that hath known man by lying with him.
>
> But all the women children that have not known a man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.

Moses is a patriarch of the Jews, and the meekest man. But suppose any pagan or Mohammedan general were to behave to a Christian city as Moses behaved to the people of Midian, what should we say of him? But God was *pleased* with him.

Further, in the sixteenth chapter of Numbers you will find how Moses the Meek treated Korah, Dathan, and Abiram for rebelling against himself and Aaron; how the earth opened and swallowed these men and their families and friends, at a hint from Moses; and how the Lord slew with fire from heaven two hundred and fifty men who were offering incense, and how afterwards there came a pestilence by which some fourteen thousand persons died.

Moses was a politician; his brother was a priest. I shall express no opinion of the pair; but I quote from the Book of Exodus, as follows:

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me.

And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron.

And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To-morrow is a feast to the Lord.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves.

Aaron, when asked by Moses why he has done this thing, tells a lie:

And Moses said unto Aaron, What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?

And Aaron said, Let not the anger of my lord wax hot; thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief.

For they said unto me, Make us gods, which shall go before

us: for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him.

And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it to me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

And he said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.

And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.

So much for this meek father of the Jews.

And now let us consider David and his son Solomon, the greatest of the Bible kings, and the ancestors of Jesus Christ.

Judging King David by the Bible record, I should conclude that he was a cruel, treacherous, and licentious savage. He lived for some time as a bandit, robbing the subjects of the King of Gath, who had given him shelter. When asked about this by the king, David lied. As to the nature of his conduct at this time, no room is left for doubt by the story of Nabal. David demanded blackmail of Nabal, and, on its being refused, set out with four hundred armed men to rob Nabal, and kill every male on his estate. This he was prevented from doing by Nabal's wife, who came out to meet David with fine presents and fine words. *Ten days later Nabal died, and David married his widow.* See twenty-fifth chapter First Book of Samuel.

David had seven wives, and many children. One of his favorite wives was Bathsheba, the widow of Uriah.

While Uriah was at "the front," fighting for David, that king seduced his wife, Bathsheba. To avoid discovery, David recalled Uriah from the war, and bade

him go home to his wife. Uriah said it would dishonor him to seek ease and pleasure at home while other soldiers were enduring hardship at the front. The king then made the soldier drunk, but even so could not prevail.

Therefore David sent word to the general to place Uriah in the front of the battle, where the fight was hardest. And Uriah was killed, and David married Bathsheba, who became the mother of Solomon.

So much for David's honor. Now for a sample of his humanity. I quote from the twelfth chapter of the Second Book of Samuel:

> And Joab sent messengers to David, and said, I have fought against Rabbah, and have taken the city of waters.
>
> Now therefore gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: lest I take the city, and it be called after my name.
>
> And David gathered all the people together, and went to Rabbah, and fought against it, and took it.
>
> And he took their king's crown from off his head, the weight whereof was a talent of gold with the precious stones: and it was set on David's head. And he brought forth the spoil of the city in great abundance.
>
> And he brought forth the people that were therein, and put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kiln: and thus did he unto all the cities of the children of Ammon. So David and all the people returned unto Jerusalem.

But nothing in David's life became him so little as his leaving of it. I quote from the second chapter of the First Book of Kings. David, on his deathbed, is speaking to Solomon, his son:

> Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet.
>
> Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.

But show kindness unto the sons of Barzillai, the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother.

And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the Lord, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword.

Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood.

These seem to have been the last words spoken by King David. Joab was his best general, and had many times saved David's throne.

Solomon began by stealing the throne from his brother, the true heir. Then he murders the brother he has robbed, and disgraces and exiles a priest, who had been long a faithful friend to David, his father. Later, he murders Joab at the altar, and brings down the hoar head of Shimei to the grave with blood.

After which he gets him much wisdom, builds a temple, and marries many wives.

Much glamor has been cast upon the names of Solomon and David by their alleged writings. But it is now acknowledged that David wrote few, if any, of the Psalms, and that Solomon wrote neither Ecclesiastes nor the Song of Songs, though some of the Proverbs may be his.

It seems strange to me that such men as Moses, David, and Solomon should be glorified by Christian men and women who execrate Henry VIII. and Richard III. as monsters.

My pet aversion amongst the Bible heroes is Jacob; but Abraham and Lot were pitiful creatures.

Jacob cheated his brother out of the parental blessing, and lied about God, and lied to his father to accomplish

his end. He robbed his brother of his birthright by trading on his necessity. He fled from his brother's wrath, and went to his uncle Laban. Here he cheated his uncle out of his cattle and his wealth, and at last came away with his two cousins as his wives, one of whom had stolen her own father's gods.

Abraham was the father of Ishmael by the servant-maid Hagar. At his wife's demand he allowed Hagar and Ishmael to be driven into the desert to die. And here is another pretty story of Abraham. He and his family are driven forth by a famine:

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

And it came to pass, that, when Abram was come into Egypt, the Egyptians beheld the woman that she was very fair.

The princes also of Pharaoh saw her, and commended her before Pharaoh: and the woman was taken into Pharaoh's house.

And he entreated Abram well for her sake: and he had sheep, and oxen, and he asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she asses, and camels.

And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife.

And Pharaoh called Abram, and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife?

Why saidst thou, She is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife: now therefore behold thy wife, take her, and go thy way.

And Pharaoh commanded his men concerning him: and they sent him away, and his wife, and all that he had.

But Abraham was so little ashamed of himself that he did the same thing again, many years afterwards, and Abimelech, King of Gerar, behaved to him as nobly as did King Pharaoh on the former occasion.

The story of Lot is too disgusting to repeat. But what are we to think of his offering his daughters to the mob, and of his subsequent conduct?

And what of Noah, who got drunk, and then cursesd the whole of his sons' descendants forever, because Ham had seen him in his shame?

Joseph seems to me to have been anything but an admirable character, and I do not see how his baseness in depriving the Egyptians of their liberties and their land by a corner in wheat can be condoned. Jacob robbed his brother of his birthright by trading on his hunger; Joseph robbed a whole people in the same way.

Samson was a dissolute ruffian and murderer, who in these days would be hanged as a brigand.

Reuben committed incest. Simeon and Levi were guilty of treachery and massacre. Judah was guilty of immorality and hypocrisy.

Joshua was a Jewish general of the usual type. When he captured a city he murdered every man, woman, and child within its walls. Here is one example from the tenth chapter of the Book of Joshua:

> And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, to Debir; and fought against it:
>
> And he took it, and the king thereof, and all the cities thereof; and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and utterly destroyed all the souls that were therein; he left none remaining: as he had done to Hebron, so he did to Debir, and to the king thereof; as he had done also to Libnah, and to her king.
>
> So Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale, and of the springs, and all their kings: he left none remaining, but utterly destroyed all that breathed, as the Lord God of Israel commanded.
>
> And Joshua smote them from Kadesh-barnea even unto Gaza, and all the country of Goshen, even unto Gibeon.

Elijah the prophet was of the same uncompromising kind. After he had mocked the god Baal, and had triumphed over him by a miracle, he said to the Israelites:

"Take the prophets of Baal. *Let not one of them escape.*" And they took them, and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

Now, there were 450 of the priests of Baal, all of whom Elijah the prophet had killed in cold blood.

And here is a story about Elisha, another great prophet of the Jews. I quote from the second chapter of the Second Book of Kings:

And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head.

And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

After this, Elisha assists King Jehoram and two other kings to waste and slaughter the Moabites, who had refused to pay tribute. You may read the horrible story for yourselves in the third chapter of the Second Book of Kings. There was the usual massacre, but this time the trees were cut down and the wells choked up.

Later, Elisha cures a man of leprosy, and refuses a reward. But his servant runs after the man, and gets two talents of silver and some garments under false pretenses. When Elisha hears of this crime, he strikes the servant with leprosy, *and all his seed forever.*

Now, it is not necessary for me to harp upon the conduct of these men of God: what I want to point out is that these cruel and ignorant savages have been saddled upon the Christian religion as heroes and as models.

Even to-day the man who called David, or Moses, or Elisha by his proper name in an average Christian household would be regarded as a wicked blasphemer.

And yet, what would a Christian congregation say of an "Infidel" who committed half the crimes and outrages of any one of those Bible heroes?

Do you know what the Christians called Tom Paine? To this day the respectable Christian church- or chapel-goer shudders at the name of the "infidel," Tom Paine. But in point of honor, of virtue, of humanity, and general good character, not one of the Bible heroes I have mentioned was worthy to clean Tom Paine's shoes.

Now, it states in the Bible that God loved Jacob, and hated Esau.

Esau was a *man,* and against him the Bible does not chronicle one bad act. But God hated Esau.

And it states in the Bible that Elijah went up in a chariot of fire to heaven.

And in the New Testament Christ or His apostles speak of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as being in heaven. Paul speaks of David as a "man after God's own heart"; Elijah and Moses come down from heaven, and appear talking with Christ; and, in Hebrews, Paul praises Samuel, Jephtha, Samson, and David.

My point is not that these heroes were bad men, but that, in a book alleged to be the word of God, they are treated as heroes.

I have been accused of showing irreverence towards these barbarous kings and priests. Irreverence! It is like charging a historian with disrespect to the memory of Nero.

I have been accused of having an animus against Moses, and David, and all the rest. I have no animus against any man, nor do I presume to censure my fellow creatures. I only wish to show that these favorites of God were not admirable characters, and that therefore the Bible cannot be a divine revelation. As for animus: I do not believe any of these men ever existed. I regard them as myths. Should one be angry with a myth? I

should as soon think of being angry with Bluebeard, or the Giant that Jack slew.

But I should be astonished to hear that Bluebeard had been promoted to the position of a holy patriarch, and a model of all the virtues for the emulation of innocent children in a modern Sunday school. And I think it is time the Church considered itself, and told the truth about Jehovah, and Moses, and Joshua, and Samson.

If you fail to agree with me I can only accept your decision with respectful astonishment.

THE BOOK OF BOOKS

Floods of sincere, but unmerited, adulation have been lavished on the Hebrew Bible. The world has many books of higher moral and literary value. It would be easy to compile, from the words of Heretics and Infidels, a purer and more elevated moral guide than this "Book of Books."

The ethical code of the Old Testament is no longer suitable as the rule of life. The moral and intellectual advance of the human race has left it behind.

The historical books of the Old Testament are largely pernicious, and often obscene. These books describe, without disapproval, polygamy, slavery, concubinage, lying and deceit, treachery, incest, murder, wars of plunder, wars of conquest, massacre of prisoners of war, massacre of women and of children, cruelty to animals; and such immoral, dishonest, shameful, or dastardly deeds as those of Solomon, David, Abraham, Jacob, and Lot.

The ethical code of the Old Testament does not teach the sacredness of truth, does not teach religious tolerance, nor humanity, nor human brotherhood, nor peace.

Its morality is crude. Much that is noblest in modern thought has no place in the "Book of Books." For example, take these words of Herbert Spencer's:

> Absolute morality is the regulation of conduct in such way that pain shall not be inflicted.

There is nothing so comprehensive, nothing so deep as that in the Bible. That covers all the moralities of the Ten Commandments, and all the Ethics of the Law

and the Prophets, in one short sentence, and leaves a handsome surplus over.

Note next this, from Kant:

> What are the aims which are at the same time duties? They are the perfecting of ourselves, and the happiness of others.

I do not know a Bible sentence so purely moral as that. And in what part of the Bible shall we find a parallel to the following sentence, from an Agnostic newspaper:

> Freedom of thought, freedom of speech, freedom of action are helps to the children of men in their search for wisdom.

Tom Paine left Moses and Isaiah centuries behind when he wrote:

> The world is my country: to do good my religion.

Robert Ingersoll, another "Infidel," surpassed Solomon when he said:

> The object of life is to be happy, the place to be happy is here, the time to be happy is now, the way to be happy is by making others happy.

Which simple sentence contains more wisdom than all the pessimism of the King of kings. And again, Ingersoll went beyond the sociological conception of the Prophets when he wrote:

> And let us do away for ever with the idea that the care of the sick, of the helpless, is a charity. It is not a charity: it is a duty. It is something to be done for our own sakes. It is no more a charity than it is to pave or light the streets, no more a charity than it is to have a system of sewers. It is all for the purpose of protecting society, and civilizing ourselves.

I will now put together a few sayings of Pagans and Unbelievers as an example of non-biblical morality:

> Truth is the pole-star of morality, by it alone can we steer. Can there be a more horrible object in existence than an eloquent man not speaking the truth? Abhor

Dissimulation. To know the truth and fear to speak it: that is cowardice. One thing here is worth a good deal, to pass thy life in truth and justice, with a benevolent disposition, even to liars and unjust men.

He who acts unjustly acts unjustly to himself, for he makes himself bad. The practice of religion involves as a first principle a loving compassionate heart for all creatures. Religion means self-sacrifice. A loving heart is the great requirement: not to oppress, not to destroy, not to exalt oneself by treading down others; but to comfort and befriend those in suffering. Like as a mother at the risk of her life watches over her only child, so also let every one cultivate towards all beings a bounteous friendly mind.

Man's great business is to improve his mind. What is it to you whether another is guilty or guiltless? Come, friend, atone for your own fault.

Virtue consists in contempt for death. Why should we cling to this perishable body? In the eye of the wise the only thing it is good for is to benefit one's fellow creatures.

Treat others as you wish them to treat you. Do not return evil for evil. Our deeds, whether good or evil, follow us like shadows.

Never will man attain full moral stature until woman is free. Cherish and reverence little children. Let the slave cease, and the master of slaves cease.

To conquer your enemy by force increases his resentment. Conquer him by love and you will have no aftergrief. Victory breeds hatred.

I look for no recompense — not even to be born in heaven — but seek the benefit of men, to bring back those who have gone astray, to enlighten those living

in dismal error, to put away all sources of sorrow and pain in the world.

I cannot have pleasure while another grieves and I have power to help him.

Those who regard the Bible as the "Book of Books," and believe it to be invaluable and indispensable to the world, must have allowed their early associations or religious sentiment to mislead them. Carlyle is more moral than Jeremiah; Ruskin is superior to Isaiah; Ingersoll, the Atheist, is a nobler moralist and a better man than Moses; Plato and Marco Aurelius are wiser than Solomon; Sir Thomas More, Herbert Spencer, Thoreau, Matthew Arnold, and Emerson are worth more to us than all the Prophets.

I hold a high opinion of the literary quality of some parts of the Old Testament; but I seriously think that the loss of the first fourteen books would be a distinct gain to the world. For the rest, there is considerable literary and some ethical value in Job (which is not Jewish), in Ecclesiastes (which is Pagan), in the Song of Solomon (which is an erotic love song), and in parts of Isaiah, Proverbs, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos. But I don't think any of these books equal to Henry George's *Progress and Poverty,* or William Morris' *News from Nowhere.* Of course, I am not blaming Moses and the Prophets: they could only tell us what they knew.

The Ten Commandments have been effusively praised. There is nothing in those Commandments to restrain the sweater, the rack-renter, the jerry-builder, the slum landlord, the usurer, the liar, the libertine, the gambler, the drunkard, the wife-beater, the slave-owner, the religious persecutor, the maker of wheat and cotton rings, the fox-hunter, the bird-slayer, the ill-user of horses and dogs

and cattle. There is nothing about "cultivating towards all beings a bounteous friendly mind," nothing about liberty of speech and conscience, nothing about the wrong of causing pain, nor the virtue of causing happiness; nothing against anger or revenge, nor in favor of mercy and forgiveness. Of the Ten Commandments, seven are designed as defenses of the possessions and prerogatives of God and the property-owner. As a moral code the Commandments amount to very little.

Moreover, the Bible teaches erroneous theories of history, theology, and science.

It relates childish stories of impossible miracles as facts.

It presents a low idea of God.

It gives an erroneous account of the relations between God and man.

It fosters international hatred.

It fosters religious pride and fanaticism.

Its penal code is horrible.

Its texts have been used for nearly two thousand years in defense of war, slavery, religious persecution, and the slaughter of "witches" and of "sorcerers."

In a hundred wars the Christian soldiery have perpetrated massacre and outrage with the blood-bolstered phrases of the Bible on their lips.

In a thousand trials the cruel witness of Moses has sent innocent women to a painful death.

And always when an apology or a defense of the barbarities of human slavery was needed it was sought for and found in the Holy Bible.

Renan says:

> In all ancient Christian literature there is not one word that tells the slave to revolt, or that tells the master to liberate the slave, or even that touches the problem of public right which arises out of slavery.

Mr. Remsburg, in his book, *The Bible,* shows that in America slavery was defended by the churches on the authority of the sacred Scriptures. He says:

The Fugitive Slave law, which made us a nation of kidnapers, derived its authority from the New Testament. Paul had established a precedent by returning a fugitive slave to his master.

Mr. Remsburg quotes freely from the sermons and speeches of Christian ministers to show the influence of the Bible in upholding slavery. Here are some of his many examples:

The Rev. Alexander Campbell wrote: "There is not one verse in the Bible inhibiting slavery, but many regulating it. It is not, then, we conclude, immoral."

Said the Rev. Mr. Crawder, Methodist, of Virginia: "Slavery is not only countenanced, permitted, and regulated by the Bible, but it was positively instituted by God Himself."

I shall quote no more on the subject of slavery. That inhuman institution was defended by the churches, and the appeal of the churches was to the Bible.

As to witchcraft, the Rev. T. Rhondda Williams says that in one century a hundred thousand women were killed for witchcraft in Germany. Mr. Remsburg offers still more terrible evidence; he says:

One thousand were burned at Como in one year; eight hundred were burned at Wurzburg in one year; five hundred perished at Geneva in three months; eighty were burned in a single village of Savoy; nine women were burned in a single fire at Leith; sixty were hanged in Suffolk; three thousand were legally executed during one session of Parliament, while thousands more were put to death by mobs; Remy, a Christian judge, executed eight hundred; six hundred were burned by one bishop at Bamburg; Bogult burned six hundred at St. Cloud; thousands were put to death by the Lutherans of Norway and Sweden; Catholic Spain butchered thousands; Presbyterians were responsible for the death of four thousand in Scotland; fifty thousand were sentenced to death during the reign of Francis I; seven thousand died at Trèves; the number killed in Paris in a few months is declared to have been "almost infinite." Dr. Sprenger places to total number of executions for witchcraft in Europe at *nine millions.* For centuries, witch fires burned in nearly every

town of Europe, and this Bible text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," was the torch that kindled them.

Count up the terrible losses in the many religious wars of the world, add in the massacres, the martyrdoms, the tortures for religion's sake; put to the sum the long tale of witchcraft murders; remember what slavery has been; and then ask yourselves whether the Book of Books deserves all the eulogy that has been laid upon it.

I believe that to-day all manner of evil passions are fostered, and all the finer motions of the human spirit are retarded, by the habit of reading those savage old books of the Jews as the word of God.

I do not think the Bible, in its present form, is a fit book to place in the hands of children, and it certainly is not a fit book to send out for the "salvation" of savage and ignorant people.

OUR HEAVENLY FATHER

The Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, in *Shall We Understand the Bible,* shows very clearly the gradual evolution of the idea of God amongst the Jews from a lower to a higher conception.

Having dealt with the lower conception; let us now consider the higher.

The highest conception of God is supposed to be the Christian conception of God as a Heavenly Father. This conception credits the Supreme Being with supernal tenderness and mercy—"God is Love." That is a very lofty, poetical, and gratifying conception, but it is open to one fatal objection—it is not true.

For this Heavenly Father, whose nature is Love, is also the All-knowing and All-powerful Creator of the world.

Being All-powerful and All-knowing, He has power, and had always power, to create any kind of world He chose. Being a God of Love, He would not choose to create a world in which hate and pain should have a place.

But there is evil in the world. There has been always evil in the world. Why did a good and loving God allow evil to enter the world? Being All-powerful and All-knowing, He could have excluded evil. Being good, He would hate evil. Being a God of Love, He would wish to exclude evil. Why, then, did He permit evil to enter?

The world is full of sorrow, of pain, of hatred and crime, and strife and war. All life is a perpetual deadly

struggle for existence. The law of nature is the law of prey.

If God is a tender, loving, All-knowing and All-powerful Heavenly Father, why did he build a world on cruel lines? Why does He permit evil and pain to continue? Why does He not give the world peace, and health, and happiness, and virtue?

In the New Testament Christ compares God, as Heavenly Father to Man, as an earthly father, representing God as more benevolent and tender: "How much more your Father which is in heaven?"

We may, then, on the authority of the Founder of Christianity, compare the Christian Heavenly Father with the human father. And in doing so we shall find that Christ was not justified in claiming that God is a better father to Man than Man is to his own children. We shall find that the poetical and pleasing theory of a Heavenly Father and God of Love is a delusion.

"Who among you, if his child asks bread, will give him a stone?" None amongst us. But in the great famines, as in India and Russia, God allows millions to die of starvation. These His children pray to Him for bread. He leaves them to die. Is it not so?

God made the sunshine, sweet children, gracious women; green hills, blue seas; music, laughter, love, humor; the palm tree, the hawthorn buds, the "sweet-briar wind"; the nightingale and the rose.

But God made the earthquake, the volcano, the cyclone; the shark, the viper, the tiger, the octopus, the poison berry; and the deadly loathsome germs of cholera, consumption, typhoid, smallpox, and the black death. God has permitted famine, pestilence, and war. He has permitted martyrdom, witch-burning, slavery, massacre, torture, and human sacrifice. He has for millions of

years looked down upon the ignorance, the misery, the crimes of men. He has been at once the author and the audience of the pitiful, unspeakable, long-drawn and far-stretched tragedy of earthly life. Is it not so?

For thousands of years — perhaps for millions of years — the generations of men prayed to God for help, for comfort, for guidance. God was deaf, and dumb, and blind.

Men of science strove to read the riddle of life; to guide and to succor their fellow creatures. The priests and followers of God persecuted and slew these men of science. God made no sign. Is it not so?

To-day men of science are trying to conquer the horrors of cancer and smallpox, and rabies and consumption. But not from Burning Bush, nor Holy Hill, nor by the mouth of priest or prophet does our Heavenly Father utter a word of counsel or encouragement.

Millions of innocent dumb animals have been subjected to the horrible tortures of vivisection in the frantic endeavors of men to find a way of escape from the fell destroyers of the human race; and God has allowed the piteous brutes to suffer anguish, when He could have saved them by revealing to Man the secret for which he so cruelly sought. Is it not so?

"Nature is red in beak and claw." On land and in sea the animal creation chase and maim, and slay and devour each other. The beautiful swallow on the wing devours the equally beautiful gnat. The graceful flying-fish, like a fair white bird, goes glancing above the blue magnificence of the tropical seas. His flight is one of terror; he is pursued by the ravenous dolphin. The ichneumon-fly lays its eggs under the skin of the caterpillar. The eggs are hatched by the warmth of the caterpillar's blood. They produce a brood of larvæ

which devour the caterpillar alive. A pretty child dances on the village green. Her feet crush creeping things: there is a busy ant or blazoned beetle, with its back broken, writhing in the dust, unseen. A germ flies from a stagnant pool, and the laughing child, its mother's darling, dies dreadfully of diphtheria. A tidal wave rolls landward, and twenty thousand human beings are drowned, or crushed to death. A volcano bursts suddenly into eruption, and a beautiful city is a heap of ruins, and its inhabitants are charred or mangled corpses. And the Heavenly Father, who is Love, has power to save, and makes no sign. Is it not so?

Blindness, epilepsy, leprosy, madness, fall like a dreadful blight upon a myriad of God's children, and the Heavenly Father gives neither guidance nor consolation. Only man helps man. Only man pities; only man *tries* to save.

Millions of harmless women have been burned as witches. God, our Heavenly Father, has power to save them. He allows them to suffer and die.

God knew that those women were being tortured and burnt on a false charge. He knew that the infamous murders were in His name. He knew that the whole fabric of crime was due to the human reading of His "revelation" to man. He could have saved the women; He could have enlightened their persecutors; He could have blown away the terror, the cruelty, and the ignorance of His priests and worshipers with a breath.

And He was silent. He allowed the armies of poor women to be tortured and murdered in His name. Is it not so?

Will you, then, compare the Heavenly Father with a father among men? Is there any earthly father who would allow his children to suffer as God allows Man to

suffer? If a man had knowledge and power to prevent or to abolish war and ignorance and hunger and disease; if a man had the knowledge and the power to abolish human error and human suffering and human wrong and did not do it, we should call him an inhuman monster, a cruel fiend. Is it not so?

But God has knowledge and power, and we are asked to regard Him as a Heavenly Father, and a God of infinite wisdom, and infinite mercy, and infinite love.

The Christians used to tell us, and some still tell us, that this Heavenly Father of infinite love and mercy would doom the creatures He had made to Hell — for their *sins*. That, having created us imperfect, He would punish our imperfections with everlasting torture in a lake of everlasting fire. They used to tell us that this good God allowed a Devil to come on earth and tempt man to his ruin. They used to say this Devil would win more souls than Christ could win: that there should be "more goats than sheep."

To escape from these horrible theories, the Christians (some of them) have thrown over the doctrines of Hell and the Devil.

But without a Devil how can we maintain a belief in a God of love and kindness? With a good God, and a bad God (or Devil), one might get along; for then the good might be ascribed to God, and the evil to the Devil. And that is what the old Persians did in their doctrine of Ormuzd and Ahrimann. But with no Devil the belief in a merciful and loving Heavenly Father becomes impossible.

If God blesses, who curses? If God saves, who damns? If God helps, who harms?

This belief in a "Heavenly Father," like the belief in the perfection of the Bible, drives its votaries into weird

and wonderful positions. For example, a Christian wrote to me about an animal called the aye-aye. He said:

> There is a little animal called an aye-aye. This animal has two hands. Each hand has five fingers. The peculiar thing about these hands is that the middle finger is elongated a great deal — it is about twice as long as the others. This is to enable it to scoop a special sort of insect out of special cracks in the special trees it frequents. Now, how did the finger begin to elongate? A little lengthening would be absolutely no good, as the cracks in the trees are 2 inches or 3 inches deep. It must have varied from the ordinary length to one twice as long at once. There is no other way. Where does natural selection come in? In this, as in scores of other instances, is shown the infinite goodness of God."

Now, how does the creation of this long finger show the "infinite goodness of God." The infinite goodness of God to whom? To the animal whose special finger enables him to catch the insect? Then what about the insect? Where does he come in? Does not the long finger of the animal show the infinite badness of God to the insect?

What of the infinite goodness of God in teaching the cholera microbe to feed on man? What of the infinite goodness of God in teaching the grub of the ichneumon-fly to eat up the cabbage caterpillar alive?

I see no infinite goodness here, but only the infinite foolishness of sentimental superstition.

If a man fell into the sea, and saw a shark coming, I cannot fancy him praising the infinite goodness of God in giving the shark so large a mouth. The greyhound's speed is a great boon to the greyhound; but it is no boon to the hare.

But this theory of a merciful and loving Heavenly Father is vital to the Christian religion.

Destroy the idea of the Heavenly Father, who is Love, and Christianity is a heap of ruins. For there is no

longer a benevolent God to build our hopes upon; and Jesus Christ, whose glory is a newer revelation of God, has not revealed Him truly, as He is, but only as Man fain would believe Him to be.

And I claim that this Heavenly Father is a myth: that in face of a knowledge of life and the world, we cannot reasonably believe in Him.

There is no Heavenly Father watching tenderly over us, His children. He is the baseless shadow of a wistful human dream.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

As to prayer and praise.

Christians believe that God is just, that He is all-wise and all-knowing.

If God is just, will He not do justice without being entreated of men?

If God is all-wise, and knows all that happens, will He not know what is for man's good better than man can tell Him?

If He knows better than Man knows what is best for Man, and if He is a just God and a loving Father, will He not do right without any advice or reminder from Man?

If He is a just God, will He give us less than justice unless we pray to Him; or will He give us more than justice because we importune Him?

To ask God for His love, or for His grace, or for any worldly benefit seems to me unreasonable.

If God knows we need His grace, or if He knows we need some help or benefit, He will give it to us if we deserve it. If we do not deserve it, or do not need what we ask for, it would not be just nor wise of Him to grant our prayer.

To pray to God is to insult Him. What would a man think if his children knelt and begged for his love or for their daily bread? He would think his children showed a very low conception of their father's sense of duty and affection.

Then Christians think God answers prayer. How can they think that?

In the many massacres, and famines, and pestilences

has God answered prayer? As we learn more and more of the laws of nature we put less and less reliance on the effect of prayer.

When fever broke out, men used to run to the priest; now they run to the doctor. In old times when plague struck a city, the priests marched through the streets bearing the Host, and the people knelt to pray; now the authorities serve out soap and medicine and look sharply to the drains.

And yet there still remains a superstitious belief in prayer, and most surprising are some of its manifestations.

For instance, I went recently to see Wilson Barrett in *The Silver King*. Wilfrid Denver, a drunken gambler, follows a rival to kill him. He does not kill him, but he thinks he has killed him. He flies from justice.

Now, this man Denver leaves London by a fast train for Liverpool. Between London and Rugby he jumps out of the train, and, after limping many miles, goes to an inn, orders dinner and a private room, and asks for the evening paper.

While he waits for the paper he kneels down and prays to God, for the sake of wife and children, to allow him to escape.

And, directly after, in comes a girl with the paper, and Denver reads how the train he rode in caught fire, and how all the passengers in the first three coaches were burnt to cinders.

Down goes Denver on his knees, *and thanks God for listening to his prayer.*

And not a soul in the audience laughed. God, to allow a murderer to escape from the law, has burnt to death a lot of innocent passengers, and Wilfrid Denver is piously grateful. And nobody laughed!

But Christians tell us they *know* that prayer is efficacious. And to them it may be so in some measure. Perhaps, if a man pray for strength to resist temptation, or for guidance in time of perplexity, and if he have *faith,* his prayer shall avail him something.

Why? Not because God will hear, or answer, but for two natural reasons.

First, the act of prayer is emotional, and so calms the man who prays, for much of his excitement is worked off. It is so when a sick man groans: it eases his pain. It is so when a woman weeps: it relieves her overcharged heart.

Secondly, the act of prayer gives courage or confidence, in proportion to the faith of him that prays. If a man has to cross a deep ravine by a narrow plank, and if his heart fail him, and he prays for God's help, believing that he will get it, he will walk his plank with more confidence. If he prays for help against a temptation, he is really appealing to his own better nature; he is rousing up his dormant faculty of resistance and desire for righteousness, and so rises from his knees in a sweeter and calmer frame of mind.

For myself, I never pray, and never feel the need of prayer. And though I admit, as above, that it may have some present advantage, yet I am inclined to think that it is bought too dearly at the price of a decrease in our self-reliance. I do not think it is good for a man to be always asking for help, for benefits, or for pardon. It seems to me that such a habit must tend to weaken character.

"He prayeth best who loveth best all things both great and small." It is better to work for the general good, to help our weak or friendless fellow-creatures, than to pray

for our own grace, or benefit, or pardon. Work is nobler than prayer, and far more dignified.

And as to praise. I cannot imagine the Creator of the Universe wanting men's praise. Does a wise man prize the praise of fools? Does a strong man value the praise of the weak? Does any man of wisdom and power care for the applause of his inferiors?

We make God into a puny man, a man full of vanity and "love of approbation," when we confer on Him the impertinence of our prayers and our adoration.

While there is so much grief and misery and unmerited and avoidable suffering in the world, it is pitiful to see the Christian millions squander such a wealth of time and energy and money on praise and prayer.

If you were a human father, would you rather your children praised you and neglected each other, or that brother should stand by brother and sister cherish sister? Then "how much more your Father which is in Heaven?"

Twelve millions of our British people on the brink of starvation! In Christian England hundreds of thousands of thieves, knaves, idlers, drunkards, cowards, and harlots; and fortunes spent on churches and the praise of God.

If the Bible had not habituated us to the idea of a barbarous God who was always ravenous for praise and sacrifice, we could not tolerate the mockery of "Divine Service" by well-fed and respectable Christians in the midst of untaught ignorance, unchecked roguery, unbridled vice, and the degradation and defilement and ruin of weak women and little children. Seven thousand pounds to repair a chapel to the praise and glory of God, and under its very walls you may buy a woman's soul for a few pieces of silver.

I cannot imagine a God who would countenance such a religion. I cannot understand why Christians are not ashamed of it. To me the national affectation of piety and holiness resembles a white shirt put on over a dirty skin.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE RESURRECTION

Value of the Evidence in Law

Christianity as a religion must, I am told, stand or fall with the claims that Christ was divine, and that He rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven. Archdeacon Wilson, in a sermon at Rochdale, described the divinity and Resurrection of Christ as "the central doctrines of Christianity." The question we have to consider here is the question of whether these central doctrines are true.

Christians are fond of saying that the Resurrection is one of the best attested facts in history. I hold that the evidence for the Resurrection would not be listened to in a court of law, and is quite inadmissible in a court of cool and impartial reason.

First of all, then, what is the fact which this evidence is supposed to prove? The fact alleged is a most marvelous miracle, and one upon which a religion professed by some hundreds of millions of human beings is founded. The fact alleged is that nearly two thousand years ago God came into the world as a man, that He was known as Jesus of Nazareth, that He was crucified, died upon the cross, was laid in a tomb, and on the third day came to life again, left His tomb, and subsequently ascended into Heaven.

The fact alleged, then, is miraculous and important, and the evidence in proof of such a fact should be overwhelmingly strong.

We should demand stronger evidence in support of a

thing alleged to have happened a thousand years ago than we should demand in support of a fact alleged to have happened yesterday.

The Resurrection is alleged to have happened eighteen centuries ago.

We should demand stronger evidence in support of an alleged fact which was outside human experience than we should demand in support of a fact common to human experience.

The incarnation of a God in human form, the resurrection of a man or a God from the dead, are facts outside human experience.

We should demand stronger evidence in support of an alleged fact when the establishment of that fact was of great importance to millions of men and women, than we should demand when the truth or falsity of the alleged fact mattered very little to anybody.

The alleged fact of the Resurrection is of immense importance to hundreds of millions of people.

We should demand stronger evidence in support of an alleged fact when many persons were known to have strong political, sentimental, or mercenary motives for proving the fact alleged, than we should demand when no serious interest would be affected by a decision for or against the fact alleged.

There are millions of men and women known to have strong motives — sentimental, political, or mercenary — for proving the verity of the Resurrection.

On all these counts we are justified in demanding the strongest of evidence for the alleged fact of Christ's resurrection from the dead.

The more abnormal or unusual the occurrence, the weightier should be the evidence of its truth.

If a man told a mixed company that Captain Webb

swam the English Channel, he would have a good chance of belief.

The incident happened but a few years ago, it was reported in all the newspapers of the day. It is not in itself an impossible thing for a man to do.

But if the same man told the same audience that five hundred years ago an Irish sailor had swum from Holyhead to New York, his statement would be received with less confidence.

Because five centuries is a long time, there is no credible record of the feat, and we *cannot believe* any man capable of swimming about four thousand miles.

Let us look once more at the statement made by the believers in the Resurrection.

We are asked to believe that the all-powerful external God, the God who created twenty millions of suns, came down to earth, was born of a woman, was crucified, was dead, was laid in a tomb for three days, and then came to life again, and ascended into Heaven.

What is the nature of the evidence produced in support of this tremendous miracle?

Is there any man or woman alive who has seen God? No. Is there any man or woman alive who has seen Christ? No.

There is no human being alive who can say that God exists or that Christ exists. The most they can say is that they *believe* that God and Christ exist.

No historian claims that any God has been seen on earth for nearly nineteen centuries.

The Christians deny the assertions of all other religions as to divine visits; and all the other religions deny their assertions about God and Christ.

There is no reason why God should have come down to earth, to be born of a woman, and die on the cross.

He could have convinced and won over mankind without any such act. He has *not* convinced nor won over mankind by that act. Not one-third of mankind are professing Christians to-day, and of those not one in ten is a true Christian and a true believer.

The Resurrection, therefore, seems to have been unreasonable, unnecessary, and futile. It is also contrary to science and to human experience.

What is the nature of the evidence?

The common idea of the man in the street is the idea that the Gospels were written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John were contemporaries of Christ; and that the Gospels were written and circulated during the lives of the authors.

There is no evidence to support these beliefs. There is no evidence, outside the New Testament, that any of the Apostles ever existed. We know nothing about Paul, Peter, John, Mark, Luke, or Matthew, except what is told in the New Testament.

Outside the Testament there is not a word of historical evidence of the divinity of Christ, of the virgin birth, of the Resurrection or Ascension.

Therefore it is obvious that, before we can be expected to believe the tremendous story of the Resurrection, we must be shown overwhelming evidence of the authenticity of the Scriptures.

Before you can prove your miracle you have to prove your book.

Suppose the case to come before a judge. Let us try to imagine what would happen:

COUNSEL: M'lud, may it please your ludship. It is stated by Paul of Tarsus that he and others worked miracles —
THE JUDGE: Do you intend to call Paul of Tarsus?
COUNSEL: No, m'lud. He is dead.
JUDGE: Did he make a proper sworn deposition?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud. But some of his letters are extant, and I propose to put them in.

JUDGE: Are these letters affidavits? Are they witnessed and attested?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud.

JUDGE: Are they signed?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud.

JUDGE: Are they in the handwriting of this Paul of Tarsus?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud. They are copies; the originals are lost.

JUDGE: Who was Paul of Tarsus?

COUNSEL: M'lud, he was the apostle to the Gentiles.

JUDGE: You intend to call some of these Gentiles?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud. There are none living.

JUDGE: But you don't mean to say — how long has this shadowy witness, Paul of Tarsus, been dead?

COUNSEL: Not two thousand years, m'lud.

JUDGE: Thousand years dead? Can you bring evidence to prove that he was ever alive?

COUNSEL: Circumstantial, m'lud.

JUDGE: I cannot allow you to read the alleged statements of a hypothetical witness who is acknowledged to have been dead for nearly two thousand years. I cannot admit the alleged letters of Paul as evidence.

COUNSEL: I shall show that the act of resurrection was witnessed by one Mary Magdalene, by a Roman soldier —

JUDGE: What is the soldier's name?

COUNSEL: I don't know, m'lud.

JUDGE: Call him.

COUNSEL: He is dead, m'lud.

JUDGE: Deposition?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud.

JUDGE: Strike out his evidence. Call Mary Magdalene.

COUNSEL: She is dead, m'lud. But I shall show that she told the disciples —

JUDGE: What she told the disciples is not evidence.

COUNSEL: Well, m'lud, I shall give the statements of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Matthew states very plainly that —

JUDGE: Of course, you intend to call Matthew?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud. He is — he is dead.

JUDGE: It seems to me that to prove this resurrection you will have to perform a great many more. Are Mark and John dead, also?

COUNSEL: Yes, m'lud.

JUDGE: Who were they?

COUNSEL: I — I don't know, m'lud.

JUDGE: These statements of theirs, to which you allude; are they in their own handwriting?

COUNSEL: May it please you ludship, they did not write them. The statements are not given as their own statements, but only as statements "according to them." The statements are really

copies of translations of copies of translations of statements supposed to be based upon what someone told Matthew, and—

JUDGE: Who copied and translated, and re-copied and re-translated, this hearsay evidence?

COUNSEL: I do not know, m'lud.

JUDGE: Were the copies seen and revised by the authors? Did they correct the proofs?

COUNSEL: I don't know, m'lud.

JUDGE: Don't know? Why?

COUNSEL: There is no evidence that the documents had ever been heard of until long after the authors were dead.

JUDGE: I never heard of such a case. I cannot allow you to quote these papers. They are not evidence. Have you *any* witnesses?

COUNSEL: No, m'lud.

That fancy dialogue about expresses the legal value of the evidence for this important miracle.

But, legal value not being the only value, let us now consider the evidence as mere laymen.

THE GOSPEL WITNESSES

As men of the world, with some experience in sifting and weighing evidence, what can we say about the evidence for the Resurrection?

In the first place, there is no acceptable evidence outside the New Testament, and the New Testament is the authority of the Christian Church.

In the second place, there is nothing to show that the Gospels were written by eye-witnesses of the alleged fact.

In the third place, the Apostle Paul was not an eye-witness of the alleged fact.

In the fourth place, although there is some evidence that some Gospels were known in the first century, there is no evidence that the Gospels as we know them were then in existence.

In the fifth place, even supposing that the existing Gospels and the Epistles of Paul were originally composed by men who knew Christ, and that these men were entirely honest and capable witnesses, there is no certainty that what they wrote has come down to us unaltered.

The only serious evidence of the Resurrection being in the books of the New Testament, we are bound to scrutinize those books closely, as on their testimony the case for Christianity entirely depends.

Who, then, are the witnesses? They are the authors of the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles of Peter and of Paul.

Who were these authors? Matthew and John are "supposed" to have been disciples of Christ; but were they? I should say Matthew certainly was not contemporary with Jesus, for in the last chapter of the Gospel according to Matthew we read as follows:

> Now while they were going behold some of the guard came into the city, and told unto the chief priests all the things that were come to pass. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and rid you of care. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying was spread abroad among the Jews, and continueth until this day.

Matthew tells us that the saying "continueth until this day." Which day? The day on which Matthew is writing or speaking. Now, a man does not say of a report or belief that it "continueth until this day" unless that report or belief originated a long time ago, and the use of such a phrase suggests that Matthew told or repeated the story after a lapse of many years.

That apart, there is no genuine historical evidence, outside the New Testament, that such men as Paul, Peter, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John ever existed.

Neither can it be claimed that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John actually wrote the Gospels which bear their names. These Gospels are called the Gospel "according to Matthew," the Gospel "according to Mark," the Gospel "according to Luke," and the Gospel "according to John." They were, then, Gospels condensed, paraphrased, or copied from some older Gospels, or they were Gospels taken down from dictation, or composed from the verbal statements of the men to whom they were attributed.

Thus it appears that the Gospels are merely reports or copies of some verbal or written statements made by

four men of whom there is no historic record whatever.

How are we to know that these men ever lived? How are we to know that they were correctly reported, if they ever spoke or wrote? How can we rely upon such evidence after nineteen hundred years, and upon a statement of facts so important and so marvelous?

The same objection applies to the evidence of Peter and of Paul. Many critics and scholars deny the existence of Peter and Paul. There is no trustworthy evidence to oppose to that conclusion.

That by the way. Let us now examine the evidence given in these men's names. The earliest witness is Paul. Paul does not corroborate the Gospel writers' statements as to the life or the teachings of Christ; but he does vehemently assert that Christ rose from the dead.

What is Paul's evidence worth? He did not see Christ crucified. He did not see His dead body. He did not see Him quit the tomb. He did not see Him in the flesh after He had quitted the tomb. He was not present when He ascended into Heaven. Therefore Paul is not an eye-witness of the acts of Christ, nor of the death of Christ, nor of the Resurrection of Christ, nor of the Ascension of Christ.

If Paul ever lived, which none can prove and many deny, his evidence for the Resurrection was only hearsay evidence.

Paul, in the Epistle to the Corinthians, says that after His Resurrection Christ was "seen of about five hundred persons; of whom the great part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep."

But none of the Gospels mentions this five hundred, nor does Paul give the name of any one of them, nor

is the testimony of any one of them preserved, in the Testament or elsewhere.

Now, let us remember how difficult it was to disprove the statements of the claimant in the Tichborne Case, although the trial took place in the lifetime of the claimant, and although most of the witnesses knew the real Roger Tichborne well; and let us also bear in mind that many critics and scholars dispute the authorship of Shakespeare's plays, as to which strong contemporary evidence is forthcoming, and then let us ask ourselves whether we shall be justified in believing such a marvelous story as this of the Resurrection upon the evidence of men whose existence cannot be proved, and in support of whose statements there is not a scrap of historical evidence of any kind.

Nor is this all. The stories of the Resurrection as told in the Gospels are full of discrepancies, and are rendered incredible by the interpolation of miraculous incidents.

Let us begin with Matthew. Did Matthew see Christ crucified? Did Matthew see Christ's dead body? Did Matthew see Christ quit the tomb? Did Matthew see Christ in the flesh and alive after His Resurrection? Did Matthew see Christ ascend into heaven? Matthew nowhere says so. Nor is it stated by any other writer in the Testament that Matthew saw any of these things. No: Matthew nowhere gives evidence in his own name. Only, in the Gospel "according to Matthew" it is stated that such things did happen.

Matthew's account of the Resurrection and the incidents connected therewith differs from the accounts in the other Gospels.

The story quoted above from Matthew as to the bribing of Roman soldiers by the priests to circulate the

falsehood about the stealing of Christ's body by His disciples is not alluded to by Mark, Luke, or John.

Matthew, in his account of the fact of the Resurrection, says that there was an earthquake when the angel rolled away the stone. In the other Gospels there is no word of this earthquake.

But not in any of the Gospels is it asserted that any man or woman saw Jesus leave the tomb.

The story of His actual rising from the dead was first told by some woman, or women, who said they had seen an angel, or angels, who had declared that Jesus was risen.

There is not an atom of evidence that these young men who told the story were angels. There is not an atom of evidence that they were not men, nor that they had not helped to revive or to remove the swooned or dead Jesus.

Stress has been laid upon the presence of the Roman guard. The presence of such a guard is improbable. But if the guard was really there, it might have been as easily bribed to allow the body to be removed, as Matthew suggests that it was easily bribed to say that the body had been stolen.

Matthew says that after the Resurrection the disciples were ordered to go to Galilee. Mark says the same. Luke says they were commanded not to leave Jerusalem. John says they did go to Galilee.

So, again, with regard to the Ascension. Luke and Mark say that Christ went up to Heaven. Matthew and John do not so much as mention the Ascension. And it is curious, as Mr. Foote points out, that the two apostles who were supposed to have been disciples of Christ, and might be supposed to have seen the Ascension, if it took place, do not mention it. The story of

the Ascension comes to us from Luke and Mark, who were not present.

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. Yet Luke makes Him say to the thief on the cross: "Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Matthew, Mark, and John do not repeat this blunder.

There are many other differences and contradictions in the Gospel versions of the Resurrection and Ascension; but as I do not regard those differences as important, I shall pass them by.

Whether or not the evidence of these witnesses be contradictory, the facts remain that no one of them states that he knows anything about the matter of his own knowledge; that no one of them claims to have himself heard the story of the woman, or the women, or the angels; that no one of them states that the women saw, or said they saw, Christ leave the tomb.

As for the alleged appearances of Christ to the disciples, those appearances may be explained in several ways. We may say that Christ really had risen from the dead, and was miraculously present; we may say that the accounts of His miraculous appearance are legends; or we may say that His reappearance was not miraculous at all, for He had never died, but only swooned.

As Huxley remarked, when we are asked to consider an alleged case of resurrection, the first essential fact to make sure of is the fact of death. Before we argue as to whether a dead man came to life, let us have evidence that he *was* dead.

Considering the story of the crucifixion as historical, it cannot be said that the evidence of Christ's death is conclusive.

Death by crucifixion was generally a slow death.

Men often lingered on the cross for days before they died. Now, Christ was only on the cross for a few hours; and Pilate is reported as expressing surprise when told that he was dead.

To make sure that the other prisoners were dead, the soldiers broke their legs. But they did not break Christ's legs.

To be sure, the Apostle John reports that a soldier pierced Christ's side with a spear. But the authors of the three synoptic Gospels do not mention this wounding with the spear. Neither do they allude to the other story told by John, as to the skepticism of Thomas, and his putting his hand into the wound made by the spear. It is curious that John is the only one to tell both stories: so curious that both stories look like interpellations.

But even if we accept the story of the spear thrust, it affords no proof of death, for John adds that there issued from the wound blood and water; and blood does not flow from wounds inflicted after death.

Then, when the body of Christ was taken down from the cross, it was not examined by any doctor, but was taken away by friends, and laid in a cool sepulcher.

What evidence is forthcoming that Christ did not recover from a swoon, and that His friends did not take Him away in the night? Remember, we are dealing with probabilities, in the absence of any exact knowledge of the facts, and consider which is more probable — that a man had swooned and recovered; or that a man, after lying for three days dead, should come to life again, and walk away?

Apologists will say that the probabilities in the case of a man do not hold in the case of a God. But there is no evidence at all that Christ was God. Prove that Christ was God, and therefore that He was omnipotent,

and there is nothing impossible in the Resurrection, however improbable His death may seem.

Even assuming that the Gospels are historical documents, the evidence for Christ's death is unsatisfactory, and that for His Resurrection quite inadequate. But is there any reason to regard the Gospel stories of the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ as historical? I say that we have no surety that these stories have come down to us as they were originally compiled, and we have strong reasons for concluding that these stories are mythical.

Some two or three years ago the Rev. R. Horton said: "Either Christ was the Son of God, and one with God, or He was a bad man, or a madman. There is no fourth alternative possible." That is a strange statement to make, but it is an example of the shifts to which apologists are frequently reduced. No fourth alternative possible! Indeed there is; and a fifth!

If a man came forward to-day, and said he was the Son of God, and one with God, we should conclude that He was an impostor or a lunatic.

But if a man told us that another man had said he was a god, we should have what Mr. Horton calls a "fourth alternative" open to us. For we might say that the person who reported his speech to us had misunderstood him, which would be a "fourth alternative"; or that the person had willfully misrepresented him, which would be a fifth alternative.

So in the Gospels. Nowhere have we a single word of Christ's own writing. His sayings come to us through several hands, and through more than one translation. It is folly, then, to assert that Christ was God, or that He was mad, or an impostor.

So in the case of the Gospel stories of the Crucifixion,

the Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. Many worthy people may suppose that in denying the facts stated in the Gospels we are accusing St. Matthew and St. John of falsehood.

But there is no certainty who St. Matthew and the others were. There is no certainty that they wrote these stories. Even if they did write them, they probably accepted them at second or third hand. With the best faith in the world, they may not have been competent judges of evidence. And after they had done their best their testimony may have been added to or perverted by editors and translators.

Looking at the Gospels, then, as we should look at any other ancient documents, what internal evidence do they afford in support of the suspicion that they are mythical?

In the first place, the whole Gospel story teems with miracles. Now, as Matthew Arnold said, miracles never happen. Science has made the belief in miracles impossible. When we speak of the antagonism between religion and science, it is this fact which we have in our mind: that science has killed the belief in miracles, and, as all religions are built up upon the miraculous, science and religion cannot be made to harmonize.

As Huxley said:

> The magistrate who listens with devout attention to the precept, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," on Sunday, on Monday dismisses, as intrinsically absurd, a charge of bewitching a cow brought against some old woman; the superintendent of a lunatic asylum, who substituted exorcism for rational modes of treatment, would have but a short tenure of office; even parish clerks doubt the utility of prayers for rain, so long as the wind is in the east; and an outbreak of pestilence sends men, not to the churches, but to the drains. In spite of prayers for the success of our arms, and *Te Deums* for victory, our real faith is in big battalions and keeping our powder dry; in knowledge of the science of warfare; in energy, courage, and discipline. In

these, as in all other practical affairs, we act on the aphorism, *Laborare est orare;* we admit that intelligent work is the only acceptable worship; and that, whether there be a Supernature or not, our business is with Nature.

We have ceased to believe in miracles. When we come upon a miracle in any historical document we feel not only that the miracle is untrue, but also that its presence reduces the value of the document in which it is contained. Thus Matthew Arnold, in *Literature and Dogma,* after saying that we shall "find ourselves inevitably led, sooner or latter," to extend one rule to all miraculous stories, and that "the considerations which apply in other cases apply, we shall most surely discover, with even greater force in the case of Bible miracles," goes on to declare that "this being so, there is nothing one would more desire for a person or document one greatly values than to make them independent miracles."

Very well. The Gospels teem with miracles. If we make the accounts of the death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ "independent of miracles," we destroy those accounts completely. To make the Resurrection "independent of miracles" is to disprove the Resurrection, which is a miracle or nothing.

We must believe in miracles, or disbelieve in the Resurrection; and "miracles never happen."

We must believe miracles, or disbelieve them. If we disbelieve them, we shall lose confidence in the verity of any document in proportion to the element of the miraculous which that document contains. The fact that the Gospels teem with miracles destroys the claim of the Gospels to serious consideration as historic evidence.

Take, for example, the account of the Crucifixion in the Gospel according to Matthew. While Christ is on

the cross, "from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour," and when He dies, "behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent, and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints that had fallen asleep were raised; and coming forth out of the tombs after His Resurrection, they entered into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

Mark mentions the rending of the veil of the temple, but omits the darkness, the earthquake, and the rising of the dead saints from the tombs. Luke tells of the same phenomena as Mark; John says nothing about any of these things.

What conclusion can we come to, then, as to the story in the first Gospel? Here is an earthquake and the rising of dead saints, who quit their graves and enter the city, and three out of the four Gospel writers do not mention it. Neither do we hear another word from Matthew on the subject. The dead get up and walk into the city, and "are seen of many," and we are left to wonder what happened to the risen saints, and what effect their astounding apparition had upon the citizens who saw them. Did these dead saints go back to their tombs? Did the citizens receive them into their midst without fear, or horror, or doubt? Had this stupendous miracle no effect upon the Jewish priests who had crucified Christ as an impostor? The Gospels are silent.

History is as silent as the Gospels. From the fifteenth chapter of the first volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* I take the following passage:

> But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world to those evidences which were presented

by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of His Apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, demons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the Church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius the whole earth, or at least a celebrated province of the Roman Empire, was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of all mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. But the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe. A distinct chapter of Pliny is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of the year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendor. This season of obscurity, which surely cannot be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets and historians of that memorable age.

No Greek nor Roman historian nor scientist mentioned that strange eclipse. No Jewish historian nor scientist mentioned the rending of the veil of the temple, nor the rising of the saints from the dead. Nor do the Jewish priests appear to have been alarmed or converted by these marvels.

Confronted by this silence of all contemporary historians, and by the silence of Mark, Luke, and John, what are we to think of the testimony of Matthew on these points? Surely we can only endorse the opinion of Matthew Arnold:

> And the more the miraculousness of the story deepens, as after the death of Jesus, the more does the texture of the incidents

become loose and floating, the more does the very air and aspect of things seem to tell us we are in wonderland. Jesus after his resurrection not known by Mary Magdalene, taken by her for the gardener; appearing *in another form,* and not known by the two disciples going with him to Emmaus and at supper with him there; not known by His most intimate apostles on the borders of the Sea of Galilee; and presently, out of these vague beginnings, the recognitions getting asserted, then the ocular demonstrations, the final commissions, the ascension; one hardly knows which of the two to call the most evident here, the perfect simplicity and good faith of the narrators, or the plainness with which they themselves really say to us: *Behold a legend growing under your eyes!*

Behold a legend growing under your eyes! Now, when we have to consider a miracle-story or a legend, it behoves us to look, if that be possible, into the times in which that legend is placed. What was the "time spirit" in the day when this legend arose? What was the attitude of the general mind towards the miraculous? To what stage of knowledge and science had those who created or accepted the myth attained? These are points that will help us signally in any attempt to understand such a story as the Gospel story of the Resurrection.

THE TIME SPIRIT IN THE FIRST CENTURY

A STORY emanating from a superstitious and unscientific people would be received with more doubt than a story emanating from people possessing a knowledge of science, and not prone to accept stories of the marvelous without strict and full investigation.

A miracle story from an Arab of the Soudan would be received with a smile, a statement of some occult mystery made by a Huxley or a Darwin would be accorded a respectful hearing and a serious criticism.

Now, the accounts of the Resurrection in the Gospels belong to the less credible form of statement. They emanated from a credulous and superstitious people in an unscientific age and country.

The Jews in the days of which the Gospels are supposed to tell, and the Jews of Old Testament times, were unscientific and superstitious people, who believed in sorcery, in witches, in demons and angels, and in all manner of miracles and supernatural agents. We have only to read the Scriptures to see that it was so. But I shall quote here, in support of my assertion, the opinions taken by the author of *Supernatural Religion* from the works of Dean Milman and Dr. Lightfoot. In his *History of Christianity* Dean Milman speaks of the Jews as follows:

> The Jews of that period not only believed that the Supreme Being had the power of controlling the course of nature, but that the same influence was possessed by multitudes of subordinate spirits, both good and evil. Where the pious Christian of the present day would behold the direct Agency of the Almighty, the Jews would have invariably have interposed an angel as the author or ministerial agent in the wonderful transaction. Where the Christian moralist would condemn the fierce passion, the un-

governable lust, or the inhuman temper, the Jew discerned the workings of diabolical possession. Scarcely a malady was endured, or crime committed, which was not traced to the operation of one of these myriad demons, who watched every opportunity of exercising their malice in the sufferings and the sins of men.

Read next the opinion of John Lightfoot D.D., Master of Catherine Hall, Cambridge:

. . . Let two things only be observed: (1) That the nation under the Second Temple was given to magical arts beyond measure; and (2) that it was given to an easiness of believing all manner of delusions beyond measure. . . . It is a disputable case whether the Jewish nation were more mad with superstition in matters of religion, or with superstition in curious arts: (1) There was not a people upon earth that studied or attributed more to dreams than they; (2) there was hardly any people in the whole world that more used, or were more fond of, amulets, charms, mutterings, exorcisms, and all kinds of enchantments.

It is from this people, "mad with superstition" in religion and in sorcery, the most credulous people in the whole world, a people destitute of the very rudiments of science, as science is understood to-day — it is from this people that the unreasonable and impossible stories of the Resurrection, colored and distorted on every page with miracles, come down to us.

We do not believe that miracles happen now. Are we, on the evidence of such a people, to believe that miracles happened two thousand years ago?

We in England to-day do not believe that miracles happen now. Some of us believe, or persuade ourselves that we believe, that miracles did happen a few thousand years ago.

But amongst some peoples the belief in miracles still persists, and wherever the belief in miracles is strongest we shall find that the people who believe are ignorant of physical science, are steeped in superstition, or are abjectly subservient to the authority of priests or fakirs. Scientific knowledge and freedom of thought and speech are fatal to superstition. It is only in those times, or

amongst those people, where ignorance is rampant, or the priest is dominant, or both, that miracles are believed.

It will be urged that many educated Englishmen still believe the Gospel miracles. That is true; but it will be found in nearly all such cases that the believers have been mentally marred by the baneful authority of the Church. Let a person once admit into his system the poisonous principle of "faith," and his judgment in religious matters will be injured for years, and probably for life.

But let me here make clear what I mean by the poisonous principle of "faith." I mean, then, the deadly principle that we are to believe any statement, historical or doctrinal, without evidence.

Thus we are to believe that Christ rose from the dead because the Gospels say so. When we ask why we are to accept the Gospels as true, we are told because they are inspired by God. When we ask who says that the Gospels are inspired by God, we are told that the Church says so. When we ask how the Church knows, we are told that we must have faith. That is what I call poisonous principle. That is the poison which saps the judgment and perverts the human kindness of men.

The late Dr. Carpenter wrote as follows:

> It has been my business lately to inquire into the mental condition of some of the individuals who have reported the most remarkable occurrences. I cannot — it would not be fair — say all I could with regard to their mental condition; but I can only say this, that it all fits in perfectly well with the result of my previous studies upon the subject, namely, that there is nothing too strange to be believed by those who have once surrendered their judgment to the extent of accepting as credible things which common sense tells us are entirely incredible.

It is unwise and immoral to accept any important statement without proof.

HAVE THE DOCUMENTS BEEN TAMPERED WITH

I COME now to a phase of this question which I touch with regret. It always pains me to acknowledge that any man, even an adversary, has acted dishonorably. In this discussion I would, if I could, avoid the imputation of dishonesty to any person concerned in the foundation or adaptation of the Christian religion. But I am bound to point out the probability that the Gospels have been tampered with by unscrupulous or over-zealous men. That probability is very strong, and very important.

In the first place, it is too well known to make denial possible that many Gospels have been rejected by the Church as doubtful or as spurious. In the second place, some of the books in the accepted canon are regarded as of doubtful origin. In the third place, certain passages of the Gospels have been relegated to the margin by the translators of the Revised Version of the New Testament. In the fourth place, certain historic Christian evidence — as the famous interpolation in Josephus, for instance — has been branded as forgeries by eminent Christian scholars.

Many of the Christian fathers were holy men, many priests have been, and are, honorable and sincere; but it is notorious that in every Church the world has ever known there has been a great deal of fraud and forgery and deceit. I do not say this with any bitterness, I do not wish to emphasize it; but I must go so far as to show that the conduct of some of the early Christians was of a

character to justify us in believing that the Scriptures have been seriously tampered with.

Mosheim, writing on this subject, says:

> A pernicious maxim which was current in the schools, not only of the Egyptians, the Platonists, and the Pythagoreans, but also of the Jews, was very early recognized by the Christians, and soon found among them numerous patrons — namely, that those who made it their business to deceive, with a view of promoting the cause of truth, were deserving rather of commendation than of censure.

And if we seek internal evidence in support of this charge we need go no further than St. Paul, who is reported (Rom. iii. 7) as saying: "For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner?" I do not for a moment suppose that Paul ever wrote those words. But they are given as his in the Epistle bearing his name. I daresay they may be interpreted in more than one way: my point is that they were interpreted in an evil way by many primitive Christians, who took them as a warranty that it was right to lie for the glory of God.

Mosheim, writing of the Church of the fifth century, alludes to the

> Base audacity of those who did not blush to palm their own spurious productions on the great men of former times, and even on *Christ* Himself and His apostles, so that they might be able, in the councils and in their books, to oppose names against names and authorities against authorities. The whole Christian Church was, in this century, overwhelmed with these disgraceful fictions.

Dr. Giles speaks still more strongly. He says:

> But a graver accusation than that of inaccuracy or deficient authority lies against the writings which have come down to us from the second century. There can be no doubt that great numbers of books were then written with no other view than to deceive the simple-minded multitude who at that time formed the great bulk of the Christian community.

Dean Milman says:

It was admitted and avowed that to deceive into Christianity was so valuable a service as to hallow deceit itself.

Bishop Fell says:

In the first ages of the Church, so extensive was the license of forging, so credulous were the people in believing, that the evidence of transactions was grievously obscured.

John E. Remsburg, author of the newly published American book, *The Bible,* says:

That these admissions are true, that primitive Christianity was propagated chiefly by falsehood, is tacitly admitted by all Christians. They characterize as forgeries, or unworthy of credit, three-fourths of the early Christian writings.

Mr. Lecky, the historian, in his *European Morals,* writes in the following uncompromising style:

The very large part that must be assigned to deliberate forgeries in the early apologetic literature of the Church we have already seen; and no impartial reader can, I think, investigate the innumerable grotesque and lying legends that, during the whole course of the Middle Ages, were deliberately palmed upon mankind as undoubted facts, can follow the history of the false decretals, and the discussions that were connected with them, or can observe the complete and absolute incapacity most Catholic historians have displayed of conceiving any good thing in the ranks of their opponents, or of stating with common fairness any consideration that can tell against their cause, without acknowledging how serious and how inveterate has been the evil. It is this which makes it so unspeakably repulsive to all independent and impartial thinkers, and has led a great German historian (Herder) to declare, with much bitterness, that the phrase "Christian veracity" deserves to rank with the phrase "Punic faith."

I could go on quoting such passages. I could give specific instances of forgery by the dozen, but I do not think it necessary. It is sufficient to show that forgery was common, and has been always common, amongst all kinds of priests, and that therefore we cannot accept the Gospels as genuine and unaltered documents.

Yet upon these documents rests the whole fabric of Christianity.

Professor Huxley says:

There is no proof, nothing more than a fair presumption, that any one of the Gospels existed, in the state in which we find it in the authorized version of the Bible, before the second century, or, in other words, sixty or seventy years after the events recorded. And between that time and the date of the oldest extant manuscripts of the Gospels there is no telling what additions and alterations and interpolations may have been made. It may be said that this is all mere speculation, but it is a good deal more. As competent scholars and honest men, our revisers have felt compelled to point out that such things have happened even since the date of the oldest known manuscripts. The oldest two copies of the second Gospel end with the eighth verse of the sixteenth chapter; the remaining twelve verses are spurious, and it is noteworthy that the maker of the addition has not hesitated to introduce a speech in which Jesus promises His disciples that "in My name shall they cast out devils."

The other passage "rejected to the margin" is still more instructive. It is that touching apologue, with its profound ethical sense, of the woman taken in adultery — which, if internal evidence were an infallible guide, might well be affirmed to be a typical example of the teachings of Jesus. Yet, say the revisers, pitilessly, "Most of the ancient authorities omit John vii. 53–viii. 11." Now, let any reasonable man ask himself this question: If, after an approximate settlement of the canon of the New Testament, and even later than the fourth and fifth centuries, literary fabricators had the skill and the audacity to make such additions and interpolations as these, what may they have done when no one had thought of a canon; when oral tradition, still unfixed, was regarded as more valuable than such written records as may have existed in the latter portion of the first century? Or, to take the other alternative, if those who gradually settled the canon did not know of the oldest codices which have come down to us; or if, knowing them, they rejected their authority, what is to be thought of their competency as critics of the text?

Since alterations have been made in the text of Scripture we can never be certain that any particular text is genuine, and this circumstance militates seriously against the value of the evidence for the Resurrection.

CHRISTIANITY BEFORE CHRIST

If the story of Christ's life were true, we should not expect to find that nearly all the principal events of that life had previously happened in the lives of some earlier god or gods, long since acknowledged to be mythical.

If the Gospel record were the *only* record of a god coming upon earth, of a god born of a virgin, of a god slain by men, that record would seem to us more plausible than it will seem if we discover proof that other and earlier gods have been fabled to have come on earth, to have been born of virgins, to have lived and taught on earth, and to have been slain by men.

Because, if the events related in the life of Christ have been previously related as parts of the lives of earlier mythical gods, we find ourselves confronted by the possibilities that what is mythical in one narrative may be mythical in another; that if one god is a myth another god may be a myth; that if 400,000,000 of Buddhists have been deluded, 200,000,000 of Christians may be deluded; that if the events of Christ's life were alleged to have happened before to another person, they may have been adopted from the older story, and made features of the new.

If Christ was God — the omnipotent, eternal, and *only* God — come on earth, He would not be likely to repeat acts, to re-act the adventures of earlier and spurious gods; nor would His divine teachings be mere shreds and patches made up of quotations, paraphrases, and repeti-

tions of earlier teachings, uttered by mere mortals, or mere myths.

What are we to think, then, when we find that there are hardly any events in the life of Christ which were not, before His birth, attributed to mythical gods; that there are hardly any acts of Christ's which may not be paralleled by acts attributed to mythical gods before His advent; that there are hardly any important thoughts attributed to Christ which had not been uttered by other men, or by mythical gods, in earlier times? What *are* we to think if the facts be thus?

Mr. Parsons, in *Our Sun God,* quotes the following passage from a Latin work by St. Augustine:

> Again, in that I said, "This is in our time the Christian religion, which to know and also follow is most sure and certain salvation," it is affirmed in regard to this name, not in regard to the sacred thing itself to which the name belongs. For the sacred thing which is now called the Christian religion existed in ancient times, nor, indeed, was it absent from the beginning of the human race until the Christ Himself came in the flesh, whence the true religion, which already existed, came to be called "the Christian." So when, after His resurrection and ascension to heaven, the Apostles began to preach and many believed, it is thus written, "The followers were first called Christians at Antioch." Therefore I said, "This is in our time the Christian religion," not because it did not exist in earlier times, but as having in later times received this particular name.

From Eusebius, the great Christian historian, Mr. Parsons quotes as follows:

> What is called the Christian religion is neither new nor strange, but — *if it be lawful to testify as to the truth* — was known to the ancients.

Mr. Arthur Lillie, in *Buddha and Buddhism,* quotes M. Burnouf as saying:

> History and comparative mythology are teaching every day more plainly that creeds grow slowly up. None came into the world ready-made, and *as* if by magic. The origin of events is lost in the infinite. A great Indian poet has said: "The be-

ginning of things evades us; their end evades us also; we see only the middle."

Before Darwin's day it was considered absurd and impious to talk of "pre-Adamite man," and it will still, by many, be held absurd and impious to talk of "Christianity before Christ."

And yet the incidents of the life and death of Christ, the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, and the rites and mysteries of the Christian Church can all be paralleled by similar incidents, ethics, and ceremonies embodied in religions long anterior to the birth of Jesus.

Christ is said to have been God come down upon the earth. The idea of a god coming down upon the earth was quite an old and popular idea at the time when the Gospels were written. In the Old Testament God makes many visits to the earth; and the instances in the Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythologies of gods coming amongst men and taking part in human affairs are well known.

Christ is said to have been the Son of God. But the idea of a son-god is very much older than the Christian religion.

Christ is said to have been a redeemer, and to have descended from a line of kings. But the idea of a king's son as a redeemer is very much older than the Christian religion.

Christ is said to have been born of a virgin. But many heroes before Him were declared to have been born of virgins.

Christ is said to have been born in a cave or stable while His parents were on a journey. But this also was an old legend long before the Christian religion.

Christ is said to have been crucified. But very many

kings, kings' sons, son-gods, and heroes had been crucified ages before Him.

Christ is said to have been a sacrifice offered up for the salvation of man. But thousands and thousands of men before Him had been slain as sacrifices for the general good, or as atonements for general or particular sins.

Christ is said to have risen from the dead. But that had been said of other gods before Him.

Christ is said to have ascended into Heaven. But this also was a very old idea.

Christ is said to have worked miracles. But all the gods and saints of all the older religions were said to have worked miracles.

Christ is said to have brought to men, direct from Heaven, a new message of salvation. But the message He brought was in nowise new.

Christ is said to have preached a new ethic of mercy and peace and good-will to all men. But this ethic had been preached centuries before His supposed advent.

The Christians changed the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. Sun-day is the day of the Sun God.

Christ's birthday was fixed on the 25th of December. But the 25th of December is the day of the Winter solstice — the birthday of Apollo, the Sun God — and had been from time immemorial the birthday of the sun gods in all religions. The Egyptians, Persians, Greeks, Phœnicians, and Teutonic races all kept the 25th of December as the birthday of the Sun God.

The Christians departed from the monotheism of the Jews, and made their God a Trinity. The Buddhists and the Egyptians had Holy Trinities long before. But whereas the Christian Trinity is unreasonable, the older idea of the Trinity was based upon a perfectly lucid and natural conception.

Christ is supposed by many to have first laid down the "Golden Rule," "Do unto others as you would that they should do unto you." But the Golden Rule was laid down centuries before the Christian era.

Two of the most important of the utterances attributed to Christ are the Lord's Prayer and the "Sermon on the Mount." But there is very strong evidence that the Lord's Prayer was used before Christ's time, and still stronger evidence that the Sermon on the Mount was a compilation, and was never uttered by Christ or any other preacher in the form in which it is given by St. Matthew.

Christ is said to have been tempted of the Devil. But apart from the utter absurdity of the Devil's tempting God by offering Him the sovereignty of the earth — when God had already the sovereignty of twenty millions of suns — it is related of Buddha that he also was tempted of the Devil centuries before Christ was born.

The idea that one man should die as a sacrifice to the gods on behalf of many, the idea that the god should be slain for the good of men, the idea that the blood of the human or animal "scapegoat" had power to purify or to save, the idea that a king or a king's son should expiate the sins of a tribe by his death, and the idea that a god should offer himself as a sacrifice to himself in atonement for the sins of his people — all these were old ideas, and ideas well known to the founders of Christianity.

The resemblances of the legendary lives of Christ and Buddha are surprising: so also are the resemblances of forms and ethics of the ancient Buddhists and the early Christians.

Mr. Arthur Lillie, in *Buddha and Buddhism,* makes the following quotation from M. Leonde Rosny:

The astonishing points of contact between the popular legend of Buddha and that of Christ, the almost absolute similarity of the moral lessons given to the world between these two peerless teachers of the human race, the striking affinities between the customs of the Buddhists and the Essenes, of whom Christ must have been a disciple, suggest at once an Indian origin to Primitive Christianity.

Mr. Lillie goes on to say that there was a sect of Essenes in Palestine fifty years B.C., and that fifty years after the death of Christ there existed in Palestine a similar sect, from whom Christianity was derived. Mr. Lillie says of these sects:

Each had two prominent rites: baptism, and what Tertullian calls the "oblation of bread." Each had for officers, deacons, presbyters, ephemerents. Each sect had monks, nuns, celibacy, community of goods. Each interpreted the Old Testament in a mystical way — so mystical, in fact, that it enabled each to discover that the bloody sacrifice of Mosaism was forbidden, not enjoined. The most minute likenesses have been pointed out between these two sects by all Catholic writers from Eusebius to the poet Racine. . . . Was there any connection between these two sects? It is difficult to conceive that there can be two answers to such a question.

The resemblances between Buddhism and Christianity were accounted for by the Christian Fathers very simply. The Buddhists had been instructed by the Devil, and there was no more to be said. Later Christian scholars face the difficulty by declaring that the Buddhists copied from the Christians.

Reminded that Buddha lived five hundred years before Christ, and that the Buddhist religion was in its prime two hundred years before Christ, the Christian apologist replies that, for all that, the Buddhist Scriptures are of comparatively late date. Let us see how the matter stands.

The resemblances of the two religions are of two kinds. There is, first, the resemblance between the Christian life of Christ and the Indian life of Buddha;

and there is, secondly, the resemblance between the moral teachings of Christ and Buddha.

Now, if the Indian Scriptures *are* of later date than the Gospels, it is just possible that the Buddhists may have copied incidents from the life of Christ.

But it is perfectly certain that the charge of borrowing cannot be brought against Augustus Cæsar, Plato, and the compilers of the mythologies of Egypt and Greece and Rome. And it is as certain that the Christians did borrow from the Jews as that the Jews borrowed from Babylon. But a little while ago all Christendom would have denied the indebtedness of Moses to King Sargon.

Now, since the Christian ideas were anticipated by the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Romans, and the Greeks, why should we suppose that they were copied by the Buddhists, whose religion was triumphant some centuries before Christ?

And, again, while there is no reason to suppose that Christian missionaries in the early centuries of the era made any appreciable impression on India or China, there is good reason to suppose that the Buddhists, who were the first and most successful of all missionaries, reached Egypt and Persia and Palestine, and made their influence felt.

I now turn to the statement of M. Burnouf, quoted by Mr. Lillie. M. Burnouf asserts that the Indian origin of Christianity is no longer contested:

> It has been placed in full light by the researches of scholars, and notably English scholars, and by the publication of the original texts. . . . In point of fact, for a long time folks had been struck with the resemblances — or, rather, the identical elements — contained in Christianity and Buddhism. Writers of the firmest faith and most sincere piety have admitted them. In the last century these analogies were set down to the Nestorians; but since then the science of Oriental chronology has come into being, and proved that Buddha is many years anterior to Nestorius and Jesus. Thus the Nestorian theory had to be given

up But a thing may be posterior to another without proving derivation. So the problem remained unsolved until recently, when the pathway that Buddhism followed was traced step by step from India to Jerusalem.

There was baptism before Christ, and before John the Baptist. There were gods, man-gods, son-gods, and saviours before Christ. There were Bibles, hymns, temples, monasteries, priests, monks, missionaries, crosses, sacraments, and mysteries before Christ.

Perhaps the most important sacrament of the Christian religion to-day is the Eucharist or "Lord's Supper." But this idea of the Eucharist, or the ceremonial eating of the god, has its roots far back in the prehistoric days of religious cannibalism.

Prehistoric man believed that if he ate anything its virtue passed into his physical system. Therefore he began by devouring his gods, body and bones. Later, man mended his manners so far as to substitute animal for human sacrifice; still later, he employed bread and wine as symbolical substitutes for flesh and blood. This is the origin and evolution of the strange and, to many of us, repulsive idea of eating the body and drinking the blood of Christ.

Now, supposing these facts to be as I have stated them above, to what conclusion do they point?

Bear in mind the statement of M. Burnouf, that religions are built up slowly by a process of adaptation; add that to the statements of Eusebius, the great Christian historian, and of St. Augustine, the great Christian Father, that the Christian religion is no new thing, but was known to the ancients; and does it not seem most reasonable to suppose that Christianity is a religion founded on ancient myths and legends, on ancient ethics, and on ancient allegorical mysteries and metaphysical errors?

To support those statements with adequate evidence I should have to compile a book four times as large as the present volume. As I have not room to state the case properly, I shall content myself with the recommendation of some books in which the reader may study the subject for himself.

A list of these books I now subjoin:

The Golden Bough. Frazer. Macmillan & Co.
A Short History of Christianity. Robertson. Watts & Co.
The Evolution of the Idea of God. Grant Allen. Rationalist Press Association.
Buddha and Buddhism. Lillie. Clark.
Our Sun God. Parsons. Parsons.
Christianity and Mythology. Robertson. Watts & Co.
Pagan Christs. Robertson. Watts & Co.
The Legend of Perseus. Hartland. Nutt.
The Birth of Jesus. Soltau. Black.

The above are all scholarly and important books, and should be generally known.

For reasons given above I claim, with regard to the divinity and Resurrection of Jesus Christ:

That outside the New Testament there is no evidence of any value to show that Christ ever lived, that He ever taught, that He ever rose from the dead.

That the evidence of the New Testament is anonymous, is contradictory, is loaded with myths and miracles.

That the Gospels do not contain a word of proof by any eye-witness as to the fact that Christ was really dead; nor the statement of any eye-witness that He was seen to return to life and quit His tomb.

That Paul, who preached the Resurrection of Christ, did not see Christ dead, did not see Him arise from the dead, did not see Him ascend into Heaven.

That Paul nowhere supports the Gospel accounts of Christ's life and teaching.

That the Gospels are of mixed and doubtful origin, that they show signs of interpolation and tampering, and that they have been selected from a number of other Gospels, all of which were once accepted as genuine.

And that, while there is no real evidence of life, or the teachings, or the Resurrection of Christ, there is a great deal of evidence to show that the Gospels were founded upon anterior legends and older ethics.

But Christian apologists offer other reasons why we should accept the stories of the miraculous birth and Resurrection of Christ as true. Let us examine these reasons, and see what they amount to.

OTHER EVIDENCES OF CHRIST'S DIVINITY

Archdeacon Wilson gives two reasons for accepting the doctrines of Christ's divinity and Resurrection as true. The first of these reasons is, the success of the Christian religion; the second is, the evolution of the Christlike type of character.

If the success of the Christian religion proves that Christ was God, what does the success of the Buddhist religion prove? What does the success of the Mohammedan religion prove?

Was Buddha God? Was Mahomet God?

The archdeacon does not believe in any miracles but those of his own religion. But if the spread of a faith proves its miracles to be true, what can be said about the spread of the Buddhist and Mohammedan religions?

Islam spread faster and farther than Christianity. So did Buddhism. To-day the numbers of these religions are somewhat as follow:

Buddhist: 450 millions.

Christians: 375 millions, of which only 180 millions are Protestants.

Hindus: 200 millions.

Mohammedans: 160 millions.

It will be seen that the Buddhist religion is older than Christianity, and has more followers. What does that prove?

But as to the reasons for the great growth of these two religions I will say more by and by. At present I merely repeat that the Buddhist faith owed a great deal to the

fact that King Asoka made it the State religion of a great kingdom, and that Christianity owes a great deal to the fact that Constantine adopted it as the State religion of the Roman Empire.

We come now to the archdeacon's second argument: that the divinity of Christ is proved by the evolution of the Christlike type of character.

And here the archdeacon makes a most surprising statement, for he says that type of character was unknown on this globe until Christ came.

Then how are we to account for King Asoka?

The King Asoka of the Rock Edicts was as spiritual, as gentle, as pure, and as loving as the Christ of the Gospels.

The King Asoka of the Rock Edicts was wiser, more tolerant, more humane than the Christ of the Gospels.

Nowhere did Christ or the Fathers of His Church forbid slavery; nowhere did they forbid religious intolerance; nowhere did they forbid cruelty to animals.

The type of character displayed by the rock inscriptions of King Asoka was a higher and sweeter type than the type of character displayed by the Jesus of the Gospels.

Does this prove that King Asoka or his teacher, Buddha, was divine? Does it prove that the Buddhist faith is the only true faith? I shall treat this question more fully in another chapter.

. . . . . .

Another Christian argument is the claim that the faithfulness of the Christian martyrs proves Christianity to be true. A most amazing argument. The fact that a man dies for a faith does not prove the faith to be true; it proves that he believes it to be true — a very different thing.

The Jews denied the Christian faith, and died for their

own. Does that prove that Christianity was not true? Did the Protestant martyrs prove Protestantism true? Then the Catholic martyrs proved the reverse.

The Christians martyred or murdered millions, many millions, of innocent men and women. Does *that* prove that Christ was divine? No: it only proves that Christians could be fanatical, intolerant, bloody, and cruel.

And now, will you ponder these words of Arthur Lillie, M. A., the author of *Buddha and Buddhism?* Speaking of the astonishing success of the Buddhist missionaries, Mr. Lillie says:

> This success was effected by moral means alone, for Buddhism *is the one religion guiltless of coercion.*

Christians are always boasting of the wonderful good works wrought by their religion. They are silent about the horrors, infamies, and shames of which it has been guilty.

Buddhism is the only religion with no blood upon its hands. I submit another very significant quotation from Mr. Lillie:

> I will write down a few of the achievements of this inactive Buddha and the army of Bhikshus that he directed:
>
> 1. The most formidable priestly tyranny that the world had ever seen crumbled away before his attack, and the followers of Buddha were paramount in India for a thousand years.
>
> 2. The institution of caste was assailed and overthrown.
>
> 3. Polygamy was for the first time assailed and overturned.
>
> 4. Woman, from being considered a chattel and a beast of burden, was for the first time considered man's equal, and allowed to develop her spiritual life.
>
> 5. All bloodshed, whether with the knife of the priest or the sword of the conqueror, was rigidly forbidden.
>
> 6. Also, for the first time in the religious history of mankind, the awakening of the spiritual life of the individual was substituted for religion by body corporate.
>
> 7. The principle of religious propagandism was for the first time introduced with its two great instruments, the missionary and the preacher.

To that list we may add that Buddhism abolished slavery and religious persecution; taught temperance, chastity, and humanity; and invented the higher morality and the idea of the brotherhood of the entire human race.

What does *that* prove? It seems to me to prove that Archdeacon Wilson is mistaken.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION

WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY?

WHAT *is* Christianity? When I began to discuss religion in the *Clarion* I thought I knew what Christianity was. I thought it was the religion I had been taught as a boy in Church of England and Congregationalist Sunday schools. But since then I have read many books, and pamphlets, and sermons and articles intended to explain what Christianity is, and I begin to think there are as many kinds of Christianity as there are Christians. The differences are numerous and profound: they are astonishing. That must be a strange revelation of God which can be so differently interpreted.

Well, I cannot describe all these variants, nor can I reduce them to a common denominator. The most I can pretend to offer is a selection of some few doctrines to which all or many Christians would subscribe.

1. All Christians believe in a Supreme Being, called God, who created all beings. They all believe that He is a good and loving God, and our Heavenly Father.

2. Most Christians believe in Free Will.

3. All Christians believe that Man has sinned and does sin against God.

4. All Christians believe that Jesus Christ is in some way necessary to Man's "salvation," and that without Christ Man will be "lost."

But when we ask for the meaning of the terms "salvation" and "lost" the Christians give conflicting or divergent answers.

5. All Christians believe in the immortality of the soul.

And I think they all, or nearly all, believe in some kind of future punishment or reward.

6. Most Christians believe that Christ was God.

7. Most Christians believe that after crucifixion Christ rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven.

8. Most Christians believe, or think they believe, in the efficacy of prayer.

9. Most Christians believe in a Devil; but he is a great many different kinds of a Devil.

Of these beliefs I should say:

1. As to God. If there is no God, or if God is not a loving Heavenly Father, who answers prayer, Christianity as a religion cannot stand.

I do not pretend to say whether there is or is not *a* God, but I deny that there is a loving Heavenly Father who answers prayer.

2 and 3. If there is no such thing as Free Will man could not sin against God, and Christianity as a religion will not stand.

I deny the existence of Free Will, and possibility of man's sinning against God.

4. If Jesus Christ is not necessary to Man's "salvation," Christianity as a religion will not stand.

I deny that Christ is necessary to man's salvation from Hell or from Sin.

5. I do not assert or deny the immortality of the soul. I know nothing about the soul, and no man is or ever was able to tell me more than I know.

Of the remaining four doctrines I will speak in due course.

I spoke just now of the religion I was taught in my boyhood, some forty years ago. As that religion seems to be still very popular I will try to express it as briefly as I can.

Adam was the first man, and the father of the human race. He was created by God, in the likeness of God: that is to say, he was made "perfect."

But, being tempted of the Devil, Adam sinned: he fell. God was so angry with Adam for his sin that He condemned him and all his descendants for five thousand years to a Hell of everlasting fire.

After consigning all the generations of men for five thousand years to horrible torment in Hell, God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, down on earth to die, and to go to Hell for three days, as an atonement for the sin of Adam.

After Christ rose from the dead all who believed on Him and were baptized would go to Heaven. All who did not believe on Him, or were not baptized, would go to Hell, and burn forever in a lake of fire.

That is what we were taught in our youth; and that is what millions of Christians believe to-day. That is the old religion of the Fall, of "Inherited Sin," of "Universal Damnation," and of atonement by the blood of Christ.

There is a new religion now, which shuts out Adam and Eve, and the serpent, and the hell of fire, but retains the "Fall," the "Sin against God," and the "Atonement by Christ."

But in the new Atonement, as I understand, or try to understand it, Christ is said to be God Himself, come down to win back to Himself Man, who had estranged himself from God, or else God (as Christ) died to save man, not from Hell, but from Sin.

All these theories, old and new, seem to me impossible.

I will deal first, in a short way, with the new theories of the Atonement.

If Christ died to save Man from sin, how is it that

nineteen centuries after His death the world is full of sin?

If God (the All-powerful God, who loves us better than an earthly father loves his children) wished to forgive us the sin Adam committed ages before we were born, why did He not forgive us without dying, or causing His Son to die, on a cross?

If Christ is essential to a good life on earth, how is it that many who believe in Him lead bad lives, while many of the best men and women of this and former ages either never heard of Christ or did not follow Him?

As to the theory that Christ (or God) died to win back Man to Himself, it does not harmonize with the facts.

Man never did estrange himself from God. All history shows that Man has persistently and anxiously sought for God, and has served Him, according to his light, with a blind devotion, even to death and crime.

Finally, Man never did, and never could, sin against God. For Man is what God made him; could only act as God enabled him, or constructed him to act, and therefore was not responsible for his act, and could not sin against God.

If God is responsible for Man's existence, God is responsible for Man's act. Therefore Man cannot sin against God.

But I shall deal more fully with the subject of Free Will, and of the need for Christ as our Saviour, in another part of this book.

. . . . . .

Let us now turn to the old idea of the Fall and the Atonement.

First, as to Adam and the Fall and inherited sin. Evolution, historical research, and scientific criticism

have disposed of Adam. Adam was a myth. Hardly any educated Christians now regard him as an historic person.

But — no Adam, no Fall; no Fall, no Atonement; no Atonement, no Saviour. Accepting Evolution, how can we believe in a Fall? *When* did man fall? Was it before he ceased to be a monkey, or after? Was it when he was a tree man, or later? Was it in the Stone Age, or the Bronze Age, or in the Age of Iron?

There never *was* any "Fall." Evolution proves a long, slow *rise*.

And if there never was a Fall, why should there be any Atonement?

Christians accepting the theory of evolution have to believe that God allowed the sun to form out of the nebula, and the earth to form from the sun. That He allowed man to develop slowly from the speck of protoplasm in the sea. That at some period of man's gradual evolution from the brute, God found man guilty of some sin, and cursed him. That some thousands of years later God sent His only Son down upon the earth to save man from Hell.

But Evolution shows man to be, even now, an imperfect creature, an unfinished work, a building still undergoing alterations, an animal still evolving.

Whereas the doctrines of "the Fall" and the Atonement assume that he was from the first a finished creature, and responsible to God for his actions.

This old doctrine of the Fall, and the Curse, and the Atonement is against reason as well as against science.

The universe is boundless. We know it to contain millions of suns, and suppose it to contain millions of millions of suns. Our sun is but a speck in the universe. Our earth is but a speck in the solar system.

Are we to believe that the God who created all this boundless universe got so angry with the children of the apes that He condemned them all to Hell for two score centuries, and then could only appease His rage by sending His own Son to be nailed upon a cross? Do you believe that? Can you believe it?

No. As I said before, if the theory of evolution be true, there was nothing to atone for, and nobody to atone. *Man has never sinned against God.* In fact, the whole of this old Christian doctrine is a mass of error. There was no creation. There was no Fall. There was no Atonement. There was no Adam, and no Eve, and no Eden, and no Devil, and no Hell.

If God is all-powerful, He had power to make man by nature incapable of sin. But if, having the power to make man incapable of sin, God made man so weak as to "fall," then it was God who sinned against man, and not man against God.

For if I had power to train a son of mine to righteousness, and I trained him to wickedness, should I not sin against my son?

Or if a man had power to create a child of virtue and intellect, but chose rather to create a child who was by nature a criminal or an idiot, would not that man sin against his child?

And do you believe that "our Father in Heaven, our All-powerful God, who is Love," would first create man fallible, and then punish him for falling?

And if He did so create and so punish man, could you call that just or merciful?

And if God is our "maker," who but He is responsible for our make-up?

And if He alone is responsible, how can man have sinned against God?

I maintain that besides being unhistorical and unreasonable, the old doctrine of the Atonement is unjust and immoral.

The doctrine of the Atonement is not just nor moral, because it implies that man should not be punished or rewarded according to his own merits or demerit, but according to the merit of another.

Is it just, or is it moral, to make the good suffer for the bad? Is it just or moral to forgive one man his sin because another is sinless? Such a doctrine — the doctrine of Salvation for Christ's sake, and after a life of crime — holds out inducements to sin.

Repentance is only good because it is the precursor of reform. But no repentance can merit pardon, nor atone for wrong. If, having done wrong, I repent, and afterwards do right, that is good. But to be sorry and not to reform is not good.

If I do wrong, my repentance will not cancel that wrong. An act performed is performed for ever. If I cut a man's hand off, I may repent, and he may pardon me. But neither my remorse nor his forgiveness will make the hand grow again. And if the hand could grow again, the wrong I did would still have been done.

That is a stern morality, but it is moral. Your doctrine of pardon " for Christ's sake " is not moral. God acts unjustly when He pardons for Christ's sake. Christ acts unjustly when He asks that pardon be granted for His sake. If one man injures another, the prerogative of pardon should belong to the injured man. It is for him who suffers to forgive.

If your son injure your daughter, the pardon must come from her. It would not be just for you to say: " He has wronged you, and has made no atonement, but I forgive him." Nor would it be just for you to forgive

him because another son of yours was willing to be punished in his stead. Nor would it be just for that other son to come forward, and say to you, and not to his injured sister, "Father, forgive him for my sake."

He who wrongs a fellow-creature, wrongs himself as well, and wrongs both for all eternity. Let this awful thought keep us just. It is more moral and more corrective than any trust in the vicarious atonement of a Saviour.

Christ's Atonement, or any other person's atonement, cannot *justly* be accepted. For the fact that Christ is willing to suffer for another man's sin only counts to the merit of Christ, and does not in any way diminish the offense of the sinner. If I am bad, does it make my offense the less that another man is so much better?

If a just man had two servants, and one of them did wrong, and if the other offered to endure a flogging in expiation of his fault, what would the just man do?

To flog John for the fault of James would be to punish John for being better than James. To forgive James because John had been unjustly flogged would be to assert that because John was good, and because the master had acted unjustly, James the guilty deserved to be forgiven.

This is not only contrary to reason and to justice: it is also very false sentiment.

DETERMINISM

CAN MAN SIN AGAINST GOD?

I HAVE said several times that Man could not and cannot sin against God.

This is the theory of Determinism, and I will now explain it.

If God is responsible for Man's existence, God is responsible for Man's acts.

The Christian says God is our Maker. God *made* Man.

Who is responsible for the quality or powers of a thing that is made?

The thing that is made cannot be responsible, for it did not make itself. But the maker is responsible, for he *made* it.

As Man did not make himself, and had neither act, nor voice, nor suggestion, nor choice in the creation of his own nature, Man cannot be held answerable for the qualities or powers of his nature, and therefore cannot be held responsible for his acts.

If God made Man, God is responsible for the qualities and powers of Man's nature, and therefore God is responsible for Man's acts.

Christian theology is built upon the sandy foundation of the doctrine of Free Will. The Christian theory may be thus expressed:

God gave Man a will to choose. Man chose evil, therefore Man is wicked, and deserves punishment.

The Christian says God *gave* Man a will. The will,

then, came from God, and was not made nor selected by man.

And this Will, the Christian says, is the "power to choose."

Then, this "power to choose" is of God's making and of God's gift.

Man has only one will, therefore he has only the "power of choice." Therefore he has no power of choice but the power God gave him.

Then, Man can only choose by means of that power which God gave him, and he cannot choose by any other means.

Then, if Man chooses evil, he chooses evil by means of the power of choice God gave him.

Then, if that power of choice given to him by God makes for evil, it follows that Man must choose evil, since he has no other power of choice.

Then, the only power of choice God gave man is a power that will choose evil.

Then, man is unable to choose good, because his only power of choice will choose evil.

Then, as man did not make nor select his power of choice, man cannot be blamed if that power chooses evil.

Then, the blame must be God's, who gave Man a power of choice that would choose evil.

Then, Man cannot sin against God, for Man can only use the power God gave him, and can only use that power in the way in which that power will work.

The word "will" is a misleading word. What is will? Will is not a faculty, like the faculty of speech or touch. The word will is a symbol, and means the balance between two motives or desires.

Will is like the action of balance in a pair of scales. It is the weights in the scales that decide the balance.

So it is the motives in the mind that decide the will. When a man chooses between two acts we say that he "exercises his will"; but the fact is, that one motive weighs down the other, and causes the balance of the mind to lean to the weightier reason. There is no such thing as an exterior will, outside the man's brain, to push one scale down with a finger. Will is abstract, not concrete.

A man always "wills" in favor of the weightier motive. If he loves the sense of intoxication more than he loves his self-respect, he will drink. If the reasons in favor of sobriety seem to him to outweigh the reasons in favor of drink, he will keep sober.

Will, then, is a symbol for the balance of motives. Motives are born of the brain. Therefore will depends upon the action of the brain.

God made the brain; therefore God is responsible for the action of the brain; therefore God is responsible for the action of the will.

Therefore Man is not responsible for the action of the will. Therefore Man cannot sin against God.

Christians speak of the will as if it were a kind of separate soul, a "little cherub who sits up aloft" and gives the man his course.

Let us accept this idea of the will. Let us suppose that a separate soul or faculty called the Will governs the mind. That means that the "little cherub" governs the man.

Can the man be justly blamed for the acts of the cherub?

No. Man did not make the cherub, did not select the cherub, and is obliged to obey the cherub.

God made the cherub, and gave him command of the man. Therefore God alone is responsible for the acts

the man performs in obedience to the cherub's orders.

If God put a beggar on horseback, would the horse be blamable for galloping to Monte Carlo? The horse must obey the rider. The rider was made by God. How, then, can God blame the horse?

If God put a "will" on Adam's back, and the will followed the beckoning finger of Eve, whose fault was that?

The old Christian doctrine was that Adam was made perfect, and that he fell. (How could the "perfect" fall?)

Why did Adam fall? He fell because the woman tempted him.

Then, Adam was not strong enough to resist the woman.

Then, the woman had power to overcome Adam's will. As the Christian would express it, "Eve had the stronger will."

Who made Adam? God made him. Who made Eve? God made her. Who made the Serpent? God made the Serpent.

Then, if God made Adam weak, and Eve seductive, and the Serpent subtle, was that Adam's fault or God's?

Did Adam choose that Eve should have a stronger will than he, or that the Serpent should have a stronger will than Eve? No. God fixed all those things.

God is all-powerful. He could have made Adam strong enough to resist Eve. He could have made Eve strong enough to resist the Serpent. He need not have made the Serpent at all.

God is all-knowing. Therefore, when He made Adam and Eve and the Serpent He knew that Adam and Eve *must* fall. And if God knew they *must* fall, how could

Adam help falling, and how *could* he justly be blamed for doing what he *must* do?

God made a bridge — built it Himself, of His own materials, to His own design, and knew what the bearing strain of the bridge was.

If, then, God put upon the bridge a weight equal to double the bearing strain, how could God justly blame the bridge for falling?

The doctrine of Free Will implies that God knowingly made the Serpent subtle, Eve seductive, and Adam weak, and then damned the whole human race because a bridge He had built to fall did not succeed in standing.

Such a theory is ridiculous; but upon it depends the entire fabric of Christian theology.

For if Man is not responsible for his acts, and therefore cannot sin against God, there is no foundation for the doctrines of the Fall, the Sin, the Curse, or the Atonement.

If Man cannot sin against God, and if God is responsible for all Man's acts, the Old Testament is not true, the New Testament is not True, the Christian religion is not true.

And if you consider the numerous crimes and blunders of the Christian Church, you will always find that they grew out of the theory of Free Will, and the doctrines of Man's sin against God, and Man's responsibility and "wickedness."

St. Paul said, "As in Adam all men fell, so in Christ are all made whole." If Adam did not fall St. Paul was mistaken.

Christ is reported to have prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

That looks as if Jesus knew that the men were not responsible for their acts, and did not know any better. But if they knew not what they did, why should God be asked to *forgive* them?

But let us go over the Determinist theory again, for it is most important.

If God is responsible for Man's existence, God is responsible for Man's acts.

The Christians say Man sinned, and they talk about his freedom of choice. But they say God made Man, as He made all things.

Now, if God is all-knowing, He knew before He made Man what Man would do. He knew that Man could do nothing but what God had enabled him to do. That he could do nothing but what he was fore-ordained by God to do.

If God is all-powerful, He need not have made man at all. Or He could have made a man who would be strong enough to resist temptation. Or he could have made a man who was incapable of evil.

If the All-powerful God made a man, knowing that man would succumb to the test to which God meant to subject him, surely God could not justly blame the man for being no better than God had made him.

If God had never made Man, then Man never could have succumbed to temptation. God made Man of His own divine choice, and made him to His own divine desire.

How, then, could God blame Man for anything Man did?

God was responsible for Man's *existence,* for God made him. If God had not made him, Man could never have been, and could never have acted. Therefore all that Man did was the result of God's creation of Man.

All Man's acts were the effects of which his creation was the cause: and God was responsible for the cause, and therefore God was responsible for the effects.

Man did not make himself. Man could not, before he existed, have asked God to make him. Man could not advise nor control God so as to influence his own nature. Man could only be what God caused him to be, and do what God enabled or compelled him to do.

Man might justly say to God: "I did not ask to be created. I did not ask to be sent into this world. I had no power to select or mold my nature. I am what you made me. I am where you put me. You knew when You made me how I should act. If You wished me to act otherwise, why did You not make me differently? If I have displeased You, I was fore-ordained to displease You. I was fore-ordained by You to be and to do what I am and have done. Is it my fault that You fore-ordained me to be and to do thus?"

Christians say a man has a will to choose. So he has. But that is only saying that one human thought will outweigh another. A man thinks with his brain: his brain was made by God.

A tall man can reach higher than a short man. It is not the fault of the short man that he is outreached: he did not fix his own height.

It is the same with the will. A man has a will to jump. He can jump over a five-barred gate; but he cannot jump over a cathedral.

So with his will in moral matters. He has a will to resist temptation, but though he may clear a small temptation, he may fail at a large one.

The actions of a man's will are as mathematically fixed at his birth as are the motions of a planet in its orbit.

God, who made the man and the planet, is responsible for the actions of both.

As the natural forces created by God regulate the influences of Venus and Mars upon the Earth, so must the natural forces created by God have regulated the influences of Eve and the Serpent on Adam.

Adam was no more blameworthy for failing to resist the influence of Eve than the Earth is blameworthy for deviating in its course round the Sun in obedience to the influences of Venus and Mars.

Without the act of God there could have been no Adam, and therefore no Fall. God, whose act is responsible for Adam's existence, is responsible for the Fall.

If God is responsible for Man's existence, God is responsible for all Man's acts.

If a boy brought a dog into the house and teased it until it bit him, would not his parents ask the boy, "Why did you bring the dog in at all?"

But if the boy had trained the dog to bite, and knew that it would bite if it were teased, and if the boy brought the dog in and teased it until it bit him, would the parents blame the dog?

And if a magician, like one of those at the court of Pharaoh, deliberately made an adder out of the dust, knowing the adder would bite, and then played with the adder until it bit some spectator, would the injured man blame the magician or the adder?

How, then, could God blame Man for the Fall?

But you may ask me, with surprise, as so many have asked me with surprise, "Do you really mean that no man is, under any circumstances, to be blamed for anything he may say or do?"

And I shall answer you that I do seriously mean that

no man can, under any circumstances, be justly blamed for anything he may say or do. That is one of my deepest convictions, and I shall try very hard to prove that it is just.

But you may say, as many have said: "If no man can be justly blamed for anything he says or does, there is an end of all law and order, and society is impossible."

And I shall answer you: "No, on the contrary, there is a beginning of law and order, and a chance that society may become civilized."

For it does not follow that because we may not blame a man we may not condemn his acts. Nor that because we do not blame him we are bound to allow him to do all manner of mischief.

Several critics have indignantly exclaimed that I make no difference between good men and bad, that I lump Torquemada, Lucrezia Borgia, Fenelon, and Marcus Aurelius together, and condone the most awful crimes.

That is a mistake. I regard Lucrezia Borgia as a homicidal maniac, and Torquemada as a religious maniac. I do not *blame* such men and women. But I should not allow them to do harm.

I believe that nearly all crimes, vices, cruelties, and other evil acts are due to ignorance or to mental disease. I do not hate the man who calls me an infidel, a liar, a blasphemer, or a quack. I know that he is ignorant, or foolish, or ill-bred, or vicious, and I am sorry for him.

Socrates, as reported by Xenophon, put my case in a nutshell. When a friend complained to Socrates that a man whom he had saluted had not saluted him in return, the father of philosophy replied: "It is an odd thing that if you had met a man ill-conditioned in body you would not have been angry; but to have met a man rudely disposed in mind provokes you."

This is sound philosophy, I think. If we pity a man with a twist in his spine, why should we not pity the man with a twist in his brain. If we pity a man with a stiff wrist, why not the man with a stiff pride? If we pity a man with a weak heart, why not the man with the weak will? If we do not blame a man for one kind of defect, why blame him for another?

But it does not follow that because we neither hate nor blame a criminal we should allow him to commit crime.

We do not blame a rattlesnake, nor a shark. These creatures only fulfill their natures. The shark who devours a baby is no more sinful than the lady who eats a shrimp. We do not blame the maniac who burns a house down and brains a policeman, nor the mad dog who bites a minor poet. But, none the less, we take steps to defend ourselves against snakes, sharks, lunatics, and mad dogs.

The *Clarion* does not hate a cruel sweater, nor a tyrannous landlord, nor a shuffling Minister of State, nor a hypocritical politician: it pities such poor creatures. Yet the *Clarion* opposes sweating and tyranny and hypocrisy, and does its best to defeat and to destroy them.

If a tiger be hungry he naturally seeks food. I do not blame the tiger; but if he endeavored to make his dinner off our business manager, and I had a gun, I should shoot the tiger.

We do not hate nor blame the blight that destroys our roses and our vines. The blight is doing what we do: he is trying to live. But we destroy the blight to preserve our roses and our grapes.

So we do not blame an incendiary. But we are quite justified in protecting life and property. Dangerous men must be restrained. In cases where they attempt

to kill and maim innocent and useful citizens, as, for instance, by dynamite outrages, they must, in the last resort, be killed.

"But," you may say, "the dynamiter knows it is wrong to wreck a street and murder inoffensive strangers, and yet he does it. Is not that free will? Is he not blameworthy?"

And I answer that when a man does wrong he does it because he knows no better, or because he is naturally vicious.

And I hold that in neither case is he to blame: for he did not make his nature, nor did he make the influences which have operated on that nature.

Man is a creature of Heredity and Environment. He is by Heredity what his ancestors have made him (or what God has made him). Up to the moment of his birth he has had nothing to do with the formation of his character. As Professor Tyndall says, "that was done *for* him, and not *by* him." From the moment of his birth he is what his inherited nature, and the influences into which he has been, sent without his consent, have made him.

An omniscient being — like God — who knew exactly what a man's nature would be at birth, and exactly the nature of the influences to which he would be exposed after his birth, could predict every act and word of that man's life.

Given a particular nature; given particular influences, the result will be as mathematically inevitable as the speed and orbit of a planet.

Man is what heredity (or God) and environment make him. Heredity gives him his nature. That comes from his ancestors. Environment modifies his nature; environment consists of the operation of forces external to

his nature. No man can select his ancestors; no man can select his environment. His ancestors make his nature; other men, and circumstances, modify his nature.

Ask any horse-breeder why he breeds from the best horses, and not from the worst. He will tell you, because good horses are not bred from bad ones.

Ask any father why he would prefer that his son should mix with good companions rather than with bad companions. He will tell you that evil communications corrupt good manners, and pitch defiles.

Heredity decides how a man shall be bred; environment regulates what he shall learn.

One man is a critic, another is a poet. Each is what heredity and environment have made him. Neither is responsible for his heredity nor for his environment.

If the critic repents his evil deeds, it is because something has happened to awake his remorse. Someone has told him of the error of his ways. That adviser is part of his environment.

If the poet takes to writing musical comedies, it is because some evil influence has corrupted him. That evil influence is part of his environment.

Neither of these men is culpable for what he has done. With nobler heredity, or happier environment, both might have been journalists; with baser heredity, or more vicious environment, either might have been a millionaire, a socialist, or even a member of parliament.

We are all creatures of heredity and environment. It is Fate, and not his own merit, that has kept George Bernard Shaw out of a shovel hat and gaiters, and condemned some Right Honorable Gentlemen to manage State Departments instead of planting cabbages.

The child born of healthy, moral, and intellectual

parents has a better start in life than the child born of unhealthy, immoral, and unintellectual parents.

The child who has the misfortune to be born in the vitiated atmosphere of a ducal palace is at a great disadvantage in comparison with the child happily born amid the innocent and respectable surroundings of a semi-detached villa in Brixton.

What chance, then, has a drunkard's baby born in a thieves' den, and dragged up amid the ignorance and squalor of the slums?

Environment is very powerful for good or evil. Had Shakespeare been born in the Cannibal Islands he would never have written *As You Like It;* had Torquemada been born a Buddhist he never would have taken to roasting heretics.

But this, you may say, is sheer Fatalism. Well! It seems to me to be *truth,* and philosophy, and sweet charity.

And now I will try to show the difference between this Determinism, which some think must prove so maleficent, and the Christian doctrine of Free Will, which many consider so beneficent.

Let us take a flagrant instance of wrong-doing. Suppose some person to persist in playing "Dolly Grey" on the euphonium, or to contract a baneful habit of reciting "Curfew shall not Ring" at evening parties, the Christian believer in Free Will would call him a bad man, and would say he ought to be punished.

The philosophic Determinist would denounce the offender's *conduct,* but would not denounce the *offender.*

We Determinists do not denounce *men;* we denounce *acts.* We do not blame men; we try to teach them. If they are not teachable we restrain them.

You will admit that our method is different from the accepted method. I shall try to convince you that it is also materially better than the accepted, or Christian, method.

Let us suppose two concrete cases: (1) Bill Sikes beats his wife; (2) Lord Rackrent evicts his tenants.

Let us first think what would be the orthodox method of dealing with these two cases.

What would be the orthodox method? The parson and the man in the street would say Bill Sikes was a bad man, and that he ought to be punished.

The Determinist would say that Bill Sikes had committed a crime, and that he ought to be restrained, and taught better.

You may tell me there seems to be very little difference in the practical results of the two methods. But that is, because we have not followed the two methods far enough.

If you will allow me to follow the two methods further you will, I hope, agree with me that their results will not be identical, but that our results will be immeasurably better.

For the orthodox method is based upon the erroneous dogma that Bill Sikes had a free will to choose between right and wrong, and having chosen to do wrong, he is a bad man, and ought to be punished.

But the Determinist bases his method upon the philosophical theory that Bill Sikes is what heredity and environment have made him; and that he is not responsible for his heredity, which he did not choose, nor for his environment, which he did not make.

Still, you may think the difference is not effectively great. But it is. For the Christian would blame Bill

Sikes, and no one but Bill Sikes. But the Determinist would not blame Sikes at all; he would blame his environment.

Is not that a material difference? But follow it out to its logical results. The Christian, blaming only Bill Sikes, because he had a "free will," would punish Sikes, and perhaps try to convert Sikes; and there his effort would logically end.

The Determinist would say: "If this man Sikes has been reared in a slum, has not been educated, nor morally trained, has been exposed to all kinds of temptation, the fault is that of the social system which has made such ignorance, and vice, and degradation possible."

That is *one* considerable difference between the results of a good religion and a bad one. The Christian condemns the man — who is a victim of evil social conditions. The Determinist condemns the evil conditions. It is the difference between the methods of sending individual sufferers from diphtheria to the hospital and the method of condemning the drains.

But you may cynically remind me that nothing will come of the Determinists' protest against the evil social conditions. Perhaps not. Let us waive that question for a moment, and consider our second case.

Lord Rackrent evicts his tenants. The orthodox method is well known. It goes no further than the denunciation of the peer, and the raising of a subscription (generally inadequate) for the sufferers.

The Determinist method is different. The Determinist would say: "This peer is what heredity and environment have made him. We cannot blame him for being what he is. We can only blame his environment. There must be something wrong with a social

system which permits one idle peer to ruin hundreds of industrious producers. The evil social system should be amended, or evictions will continue."

The Determinist conclusion would be followed by the usual inadequate subscription.

And now we will go back to the point we passed. You may say, in the case of Sikes and the peer, that the logic of the Determinist is sound, but ineffective: nothing comes of it.

I admit that nothing comes of it, and I am now going to tell you *why* nothing comes of it.

The Determinist cannot put his wisdom into action, because he is in a minority.

So long as Christians have an overwhelming majority who will not touch the drains, diphtheria must continue.

So long as the universal verdict condemns the victim of a bad system, and helps to keep the bad system in full working order, so long will evil flourish and victims suffer.

If you wish to realize the immense superiority of the Determinist principles over the Christian religion, you have only to imagine what would happen if the Determinists had a majority as overwhelming as the majority of the Christians now hold.

For whereas the Christian theory of free will and personal responsibility results in established ignorance and injustice, with no visible remedies beyond personal denunciation, the prison, and a few coals and blankets, the Determinist method would result in the abolition of lords and burglars, of slums and palaces, of caste and snobbery. There would be no ignorance and no poverty left in the world.

That is because the Determinist understands human nature, and the Christian does not. It is because the

Determinist understands morality, and the Christian does not.

For the Determinist looks for the cause of wrong-doing in the environment of the wrong-doer. While the Christian puts all the wrongs which society perpetrates against the individual, and all the wrongs which the individual perpetrates against his fellows down to an imaginary "free will."

Some Free-Willers are fond of crying out: "Once admit that men are not to be blamed for their actions, and all morality and all improvement will cease." But that is a mistake. As I have indicated above, a good many evils now rife would cease, because then we should attack the evils, and not the victims of the evils. But it is absurd to suppose that we do not detest cholera because we do not detest cholera patients, or that we should cease to hate wrong because we ceased to blame wrong-doers.

Admit the Determinist theory, and all would be taught to do well, and most would take kindly to the lesson. Because the fact that environment is so powerful for evil suggests that it is powerful for good. If man is what he is made, it behooves a nation which desires and prizes good men to be very earnest and careful in its methods of making them.

I believe that I am what heredity and environment made me. But I know that I can make myself better or worse if I try. I know that because I have learnt it, and the learning has been part of my environment.

My claim, as a Determinist, is that it is not so good to punish an offender as to improve his environment. It is good of the Christians to open schools and to found charities. But as a Determinist I am bound to say that there ought to be no such things in the world as poverty

and ignorance, and one of the contributory causes to ignorance and poverty is the Christian doctrine of free will.

Take away from a man all that God gave him, and there will be nothing of him left.

Take away from a man all that heredity and environment have given him, and there will be nothing left.

Man is what he is by the act of God, or the results of heredity and environment. In either case he is not to blame.

In one case the result is due to the action of his ancestors and society, in the other to the act of God.

Therefore a man is not responsible for his actions, and cannot sin against God.

If God is responsible for Man's existence, God is responsible for Man's acts.

A religion built upon the doctrine of Free Will and human responsibility to God is built upon a misconception and must fall.

Christianity is a fabric of impossibilities erected upon a foundation of error.

Perhaps, since I find many get confused on the subject of Free Will from their consciousness of continually exercising the "power of choice," I had better say a few words here on that subject.

You say you have power to choose between two courses. So you have, but that power is limited and controlled by heredity and environment.

If you have to choose between a showy costume and a plain one you will choose the one you like best, and you will like best the one which your nature (heredity) and your training (environment) will lead you to like best.

You think your will is free. But it is not. You may

think you have power to drown yourself; but you have not. Your love of life and your sense of duty are too strong for you.

You might think I have power to leave the *Clarion* and start an anti-Socialist paper. But I know I have not that power. My nature (heredity) and my training and habit (environment) are too strong for me.

If you knew a lady was going to choose between a red dress and a gray one, and if you knew the lady very well, you could guess her choice before she made it.

If you knew an honorable man was to be offered a bribe to do a dishonorable act, you would feel sure he would refuse it.

If you knew a toper was to be offered as much free whisky as he could drink, you would be sure he would not come home sober.

If you knew the nature and the environment of a man thoroughly well, and the circumstances (*all* the circumstances) surrounding a choice of action to be presented to him, and if you were clever enough to work such a difficult problem, you could forecast his choice before he made it, as surely as in case of the lady, the toper, and the honorable man above mentioned.

You have power to choose, then, but you can only choose as your heredity and environment *compel* you to choose. And you do not select your own heredity nor your own environment.

CHRISTIAN APOLOGIES

CHRISTIAN APOLOGIES

CHRISTIAN apologists make some daring claims on behalf of their religion. The truth of Christianity is proved, they say, by its endurance and by its power; the beneficence of its results testifies to the divinity of its origin.

These claims command wide acceptance, for the simple reason that those who deny them cannot get a hearing.

The Christians have virtual command of all the churches, universities, and schools. They have the countenance and support of the Thrones, Parliaments, Cabinets, and aristocracies of the world, and they have the nominal support of the World's Newpaper Press. They have behind them the traditions of eighteen centuries. They have formidable allies in the shape of whole schools of philosophy and whole libraries of eloquence and learning. They have the zealous service and unswerving credence of millions of honest and worthy citizens: and they are defended by solid ramparts of prejudice, and sentiment, and obstinate old custom.

The odds against the Rationalists are tremendous. To challenge the claims of Christianity is easy: to get the challenge accepted is very hard. Rationalists' books and papers are boycotted. The Christians will not listen, will not reason, will not, if they can prevent it, allow a hostile voice to be heard. Thus, from sheer lack of knowledge, the public accept the Christian apologist's assertions as demonstrated truth.

And the Christians claim this immunity from attack

as a triumph of their arms, and a further proof of the truth of their religion. Religion has been attacked before, they cry, and where now are its assailants? And the answer must be, that many of its assailants are in their graves, but that some of them are yet alive, and there are more to follow. But the combat is very unequal. If the Rationalists could for only a few years have the support of the Crowns, Parliaments, Aristocracies, Universities, Schools, and Newspapers of the world; if they could preach Science and Reason twice every Sunday from a hundred thousand pulpits, perhaps the Christians would have less cause for boasting.

But as things are, we "Infidels" must cease to sigh for whirlwinds, and do the best we can with the bellows.

So: the Christians claim that their religion has done wonders for the world; a claim disputed by the Rationalists.

Now, when we consider what Christianity has done, we should take account of the evil as well as the good. But this the Christians are unwilling to allow.

Christians declare that the divine origin and truth of their religion are proved by its beneficent results.

But Christianity has done evil as well as good. Mr. G. K. Chesterton, while defending Christianity in the *Daily News,* said:

> Christianity has committed crimes so monstrous, that the sun might sicken at them in heaven.

And no one can refute that statement.

But Christians evade the dilemma. When the evil works of their religion are cited, they reply that those evils were wrought by false Christianity, that they were contrary to the teachings of Christ, and so were not the deeds of Christians at all.

The Christian Commonwealth, in advancing the above plea as to real and false Christianity, instanced the difference between Astrology and Astronomy, and said:

> We fear Mr. Blatchford, if he has any sense of consistency, must, when he has finished his tirade against Christianity, turn his artillery on Greenwich Observatory, and proclaim the Astronomer Royal a scientific quack, on account of the follies of star-gazers in the past.

But that parallel is not a true one. Let us suppose that the follies of astrology and the discoveries of astronomy were bound up in one book, and called the Word of God. Let us suppose we were told that the whole book — facts, reason, folly, and falsehoods — was divinely inspired and literally true. Let us suppose that any one who denied the old crude errors of astrology was persecuted as a heretic. Let us suppose that any one denying the theory of Laplace, or the theory of Copernicus, would be reviled as an "Infidel." Let us suppose that the Astronomer Royal claimed infallibility, not only in matters astronomical, but also in politics and morals. Let us suppose that for a thousand years the astrological-astronomical holy government had whipped, imprisoned, tortured, burnt, hanged, and damned for everlasting every man, woman, or child who dared to tell it any new truth, and that some of the noblest men of genius of all ages had been roasted or impaled alive for being rude to the equator. Let us suppose that millions of pounds were still annually spent on casting nativities, and that thousands of expensive observatories were still maintained at the public cost for astrological rites. Let us suppose all this, and then I should say it would be quite consistent and quite logical for me to turn my verbal artillery on Greenwich Observatory.

Would the Christians listen to such a plea in any other case? Had Socialists been guilty of tyranny, of war, of massacre, of torture, of blind opposition to the truth of science, of cruel persecution of the finest human spirits for fifteen centuries, can any one believe for a moment that Christians would heed the excuse that the founders of Socialism had not preached the atrocious policy which the established Socialist bodies and the recognized Socialist leaders had put in force persistently during all those hundreds of cruel years?

Would the Christian hearken to such a defense from a Socialist, or from a Mohammedan? Would a Liberal accept it from a Tory? Would a Roman Catholic admit it from a Jew?

Neither is it right to claim credit for the good deeds, and to avoid responsibility for the evil deeds of the divine religion.

And the fact must be insisted upon, that *all* religion, in its very nature, makes for persecution and oppression. It is the assumption that it is wicked to doubt the accepted faith, and the presumption that one religion ought to revenge or justify its God upon another religion, that leads to all the pious crimes the world groans and bleeds for.

This is seen in the Russian outrages on the Jews, and in the Moslem outrages upon the Macedonians to-day. It is religious fanaticism that lights and fans and feeds the fire. Were all the people in the world of one, or of no, religion, to-day there would be no Jews murdered by Christians and no Christians murdered by Moslems in the East. The cause of the atrocities would be gone. The cause is religion.

Why is religious intolerance so much more fierce and bitter than political intolerance? Just because it *is* re-

ligious. It is the supernatural element that breeds the fury. It is the feeling that their religion is divine and all other religions wicked; it is the belief that it is a holy thing to be "jealous for the Lord," that drives men into blind rage and ruthless savagery.

We have to regard two things at once, then: the good influences of Christ's ethics, and the evil deeds of those who profess to be His followers.

As to what some Christians call "the Christianity of Christ," I suggest that the teachings of Christ were imperfect and inadequate. That they contain some moral lessons I admit. But some of the finest and most generally admired of those lessons do not appear to have been spoken by Christ, and for the rest there is nothing in His ethics that had not been taught by men before, and little that has not been extended or improved by men since His era.

The New Testament, considered as a moral and spiritual guide for mankind, is unsatisfactory. For it is based upon an erroneous estimate of human nature and of God.

I am sure that it would be easy to compile a book more suitable to the needs of Man. I think it is a gross blunder to assume that all the genius, all the experience, all the discovery and research; all the poetry, morality, and science of the entire human race during the past eighteen hundred years have failed to add to or improve the knowledge and morality of the First Century.

Mixed with much that is questionable or erroneous, the New Testament contains some truth and beauty. Amid the perpetration of much bloodshed and tyranny, Christianity has certainly achieved some good. I should not like to say of any religion that all its works were evil. But Christ's message, as we have it in the Gospels,

is neither clear nor sufficing, and has been obscured, and at times almost obliterated, by the pomps and casuistries of the schools and churches. And just as it is difficult to discover the actual Jesus among the conflicting Gospel stories of His works and words, so it is almost impossible to discover the genuine authentic Christian religion amid the swarm of more or less antagonistic sects who confound the general ear with their discordant testimonies.

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION

It is a common mistake of apologists to set down all general improvements and signs of improvements to the credit of the particular religion or political theory they defend. Every good Liberal knows that bad harvests are due to Tory government. Every good Tory knows that his Party alone is to thank for the glorious certainties that Britannia rules the waves, that an Englishman's house is his castle, and that journeymen tailors earn fourpence an hour more than they were paid in the thirteenth century.

Cobdenites ascribe every known or imagined improvement in commerce, and the condition of the masses, to Free Trade. Things are better than they were fifty years ago: Free Trade was adopted fifty years ago. *Ergo* — there you are.

There is not a word about the development of railways and steam-ships, about improved machines; about telegraphs, the cheap post and telephones; about education and better facilities of travel; about the Factory Acts and Truck Acts; about cheap books and newspapers: and who so base to whisper of Trade Unions, and Agitators, and County Councils.

So it is with the Christian religion. We are more moral, more civilized, more humane, the Christians tell us, than any human beings ever were before us. And we owe this to the Christian religion, and to no other thing under Heaven.

But for Christianity we never should have had the

House of Peers, the *Times* newspaper, the Underground Railway, the *Adventures of Captain Kettle,* the Fabian Society, or Sir Thomas Lipton.

The ancient Greek philosophers, the Buddhist missionaries, the Northern invaders, the Roman laws and Roman roads, the inventions of printing, of steam and of railways, the learning of the Arabs, the discoveries of Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Herschel, Hunter, Laplace, Bacon, Descartes, Spencer, Columbus, Karl Marx, Adam Smith; the reforms and heroisms and artistic genius of Wilberforce, Howard, King Asoka, Washington, Cromwell, Howard, Stephen Langton, Oliver Cromwell, Sir Thomas More, Rabelais, and Shakespeare; the wars and travels and commerce of eighteen hundred years, the Dutch Republic, the French Revolution, and the Jameson Raid have had nothing to do with the growth of civilization in Europe and America.

And so to-day: science, invention, education, politics, economic conditions, literature and art, the ancient Greeks and Oriental Wisdom, and the world's press count for nothing in the molding of the nations. Everything worth having comes from the pulpit, the British and Foreign Bible Society, and the *War Cry.*

It is not to our scientists, our statesmen, our economists, our authors, inventors, and scholars that we must look for counsel and reform: such secular aid is useless, and we shall be wise to rely entirely upon His holiness the Pope and His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury.

In the England of the Middle Ages, when Christianity was paramount, there was a cruel penal code, there was slavery, there were barbarous forest laws, there were ruthless oppression and insolent robbery of the poor, there were black ignorance and a terror of superstition, there were murderous laws against witchcraft, there was

savage persecution of the Jews, there were "trial by wager of battle," and "question" of prisoners by torture.

Many of these horrors endured until quite recent times. Why did Christianity, with its spiritual and temporal power, permit such things to be?

Did Christianity abolish them? No. Christianity nearly always opposed reform. The Church was the enemy of popular freedom, the enemy of popular education; the friend of superstition and tyranny, and the robber baron.

Those horrors are no more. But Christianity did not abolish them. They were abolished by the gradual spread of humane feelings and the light of knowledge; just as similar iniquities were abolished by the spread of humane doctrines in India, centuries before the birth of Christ.

Organized and authoritative religion the world over makes for ignorance, for poverty and superstition. In Russia, in Italy, in Spain, in Turkey, where the Churches are powerful and the authority is tense, the condition of the people is lamentable. In America, England, and Germany, where the authority of the Church is less rigid and the religion is nearer rationalism, the people are more prosperous, more intelligent, and less superstitious. So, again, the rule of the English Church seems less beneficial than that of the more rational and free Nonconformist. The worst found and worst taught class in England is that of the agricultural laborers, who have been for centuries left entirely in the hands of the Established Church.

It may be urged that the French, although Catholics, are as intelligent and as prosperous as any nation in the world. But the French are a clever people, and since their revolution have not taken their religion so seriously.

Probably there are more Skeptics and Rationalists in France than in any other country.

My point is that the prosperity and happiness of a nation do not depend upon the form of religion they profess, but upon their native energy and intelligence and the level of freedom and knowledge to which they have attained.

It is because organized and authoritative religion opposes education and liberty that we find the most religious peoples the most backward. And this is a strange commentary upon the claim of the Christians, that their religion is the root from which the civilization and the refinement of the world have sprung.

CHRISTIANITY AND ETHICS

CHRISTIANITY, we are told, inaugurated the religion of humanity and human brotherhood. But the Buddhists taught a religion of humanity and universal brotherhood before the Christian era; and not only taught the religion, but put it into practice, which the Christians never succeeded in doing, and cannot do to-day.

And, moreover, the Buddhists did not spread their religion of humanity and brotherhood by means of the sword, and the rack, and the thumb-screw, and the faggot; and the Buddhists liberated the slave, and extended their loving-kindness to the brute creation.

The Buddhists do not depend for the records of their morality on books. Their testimony is written upon the rocks. No argument can explain away the rock edicts of King Asoka.

King Asoka was one of the greatest Oriental kings. He ruled over a vast and wealthy nation. He was converted to Buddhism, and made it the State religion, as Constantine made Christianity the State religion of Rome. In the year 251 B. C., King Asoka inscribed his earliest rock edict. The other edicts from which I shall quote were all cut more than two centuries before our era. The inscription of the Rupuâth Rock has the words: "Two hundred and fifty years have elapsed since the departure of the teacher." Now, Buddha died in the fifth century before Christ.

The Dhauli Edict of King Asoka contains the following:

Much longing after the things [of this life] is a disobedience, I again declare; not less so is the laborious ambition of dominion by a prince who would be a propitiator of Heaven. Confess, and believe in God, who is the worthy object of obedience.

From the Tenth Rock Edict:

Earthly glory brings little profit, but, on the contrary, produces a loss of virtue. To toil for heaven is difficult to peasant and to prince, unless by a supreme effort he gives up all.

This is from the Fourteenth Edict:

Piyadasi, the friend of the Devas, values alone the harvest of the next world. For this alone has this inscription been chiseled, that our sons and our grandsons should make no new conquests. Let them not think that conquests by the sword merit the name of conquests. Let them see their ruin, confusion, and violence. True conquests alone are the conquests of *Dharma.*

Rock Edict No. 1 has:

Formerly in the great refectory and temple of King Piyadasi, the friend of the Devas, many hundred thousand animals were daily sacrificed for the sake of food meat, . . . but now the joyful chorus resounds again and again that henceforward not a single animal shall be put to death.

The Second Edict has:

In committing the least possible harm, in doing abundance of good, in the practice of pity, love, truth, and likewise purity of life, religion consists.

The Ninth Edict has:

Not superstitious rites, but kindness to slaves and servants, reverence towards venerable persons, self-control with respect to living creatures, . . . these and similar virtuous actions are the rites which ought indeed to be performed.

The Eighth Edict has:

The acts and the practice of religion, to wit, sympathy, charity, truthfulness, purity, gentleness, kindness.

The Sixth Edict has:

I consider the welfare of all people as something for which I must work.

The Dhauli Edict has:

> If a man is subject to slavery and ill-treatment, from this moment he shall be delivered by the king from this and other captivity. Many men in this country suffer in captivity, therefore the stûpa containing the commands of the king has been a great want.

Is it reasonable to suppose that a people possessing so much wisdom, mercy, and purity two centuries before Christ was born could need to borrow from the Christian ethics?

Mr. Lillie says of King Asoka:

> He antedates Wilberforce in the matter of slavery. He antedates Howard in his humanity towards prisoners. He antedates Tolstoy in his desire to turn the sword into a pruning-hook. He antedates Rousseau, St. Martin, Fichte in their wish to make interior religion the all in all.

King Asoka abolished slavery, denounced war, taught spiritual religion and purity of life, founded hospitals, forbade blood sacrifices, and inculcated religious toleration, two centuries before the birth of Christ.

Centuries before King Asoka the Buddhists sent out missionaries all over the world.

Which religion was the borrower from the other — Buddhism or Christianity?

Two centuries before Christ, King Asoka had cut upon the rocks these words:

> I pray with every variety of prayer for those who differ with me in creed, that they, following after my example, may with me attain unto eternal salvation. And whoso doeth this is blessed of the inhabitants of this world; and in the next world endless moral merit resulteth from such religious charity.— *Edict XI.*

How many centuries did it take the Christians to rise to that level of wisdom and charity? How many Christians have reached it yet?

But the altruistic idea is very much older than Buddha, for it existed among forms of life very much earlier and

lower than the human, and has, indeed, been a powerful factor in evolution.

Speaking of "The Golden Rule" in his *Confessions of Faith of a Man of Science,* Haeckel says:

> In the human family this maxim has always been accepted self-evident; as ethical instinct it was an inheritance derived from our animal ancestors. It had already found a place among the herds of apes and other social mammals; in a similar manner, but with wider scope, it was already present in the most primitive communities and among the hordes of the least advanced savages. Brotherly love — mutual support, succor, protection, and the like — had already made its appearance among gregarious animals as a social duty; for without it the continued existence of such societies is impossible. Although at a later period, in the case of man, these moral foundations of society came to be much more highly developed, their oldest prehistoric source, as Darwin has shown, is to be sought in the social instincts of animals. Among the higher vertebrates (dogs, horses, elephants, etc.), as among the higher articulates (ants, bees, termites, etc.), also, the development of social relations and duties is the indispensable condition of their living together in orderly societies. Such societies have for man also been the most important instrument of intellectual and moral progress.

It is not to revelation that we owe the ideal of human brotherhood, but to evolution. It is because altruism is better than selfishness that it has survived. It is because love is stronger and sweeter than greed that its influence has deepened and spread. From the love of the animal for its mate, from the love of parents for their young, sprang the ties of kindred and the loyalty of friendship; and these in time developed into tribal, and thence into national patriotism. And these stages of altruistic evolution may be seen among the brutes. It remained for Man to take the grand step of embracing all humanity as one brotherhood and one nation.

But the root idea of fraternity and mutual loyalty was not planted by any priest or prophet. For countless ages universal brotherhood has existed amongst the

bison, the swallow, and the deer, in a perfection to which humanity has not yet attained.

For a fuller account of this animal origin of fraternity I recommend the reader to two excellent books, *The Martyrdom of Man,* by Winwood Reade (Kegan Paul), and *Mutual Aid,* by Prince Kropotkin (Heinemann).

But the Christian claims that Christ taught a new gospel of love, and mercy, and goodwill to men. That is a great mistake. Christ did not originate one single new ethic.

The Golden Rule was old. The Lord's Prayer was old. The Sermon on the Mount was old. With the latter I will deal briefly. For a fuller statement, please see the R.P.A. sixpenny edition of Huxley's *Lectures and Essays,* and *Christianity and Mythology,* by J. M. Robertson.

Shortly stated, Huxley argument was to the following effect:

That Mark's Gospel is the oldest of the Synoptic Gospels, and that Mark's Gospel does not contain, nor even mention, the Sermon on the Mount. That Luke gives no Sermon on the Mount, but gives what may be called a "Sermon on the Plain." That Luke's sermon differs materially from the sermon given by Matthew. That the Matthew version contains one hundred and seven verses, and the Luke version twenty-nine verses.

Huxley's conclusion is as follows:

> "Matthew," having a *cento* of sayings attributed — rightly or wrongly it is impossible to say — to Jesus among his materials, thought they were, or might be, records of continuous discourse, and put them in a place he thought likeliest. Ancient historians of the highest character saw no harm in composing long

speeches which never were spoken, and putting them into the mouths of statesmen and warriors; and I presume that whoever is represented by "Matthew," would have been grievously astonished to find that any one objected to his following the example of the best models accessible to him.

But since Huxley wrote those words more evidence has been produced. From the Old Testament, from the Talmud, and from the recently discovered *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* (a pre-Christian work), the origins of the Sermon on the Mount have been fully traced.

Agnostic criticism now takes an attitude towards this sermon which may be thus expressed:

1. The sermon never was preached at all. It is a written compilation.

2. The story of the mount is a myth. The name of the mount is not given. It is not reasonable to suppose that Jesus would lead a multitude up a mountain to speak to them for a few minutes. The mountain is an old sun-myth of the Sun God on his hill, and the twelve apostles are another sun-myth, and represent the signs of the Zodiac.

3. There is nothing in the alleged sermon that was new at the time of its alleged utterance.

Of course, it may be claimed that the arrangement of old texts in a new form constitutes a kind of originality; as one might say that he who took flowers from a score of gardens and arranged them into one bouquet produced a new effect of harmony and beauty. But this credit must be given to the compilers of the gospels' version of the Sermon on the Mount.

Let us take a few pre-Christian morals.

Sextus said: "What you wish your neighbors to be to you, such be also to them."

Isocrates said: "Act towards others as you desire others to act towards you."

Lao-tze said: "The good I would meet with goodness, the not-good I would also meet with goodness."

Buddha said: "Hatred does not cease by hatred at any time; hatred ceases by love."

And again: "Let us live happily, not hating those who hate us."

In the Talmud occur the following Jewish anticipations of Christian morals:

Love peace, and seek it at any price.

Remember that it is better to be persecuted than persecutor.

To whom does God pardon sins? — To him who himself forgives injuries.

Those who undergo injuries without returning it, those who hear themselves vilified and do not reply, who have no motive but love, who accept evils with joy; it is of them that the prophet speaks when he says, the friends of God shall shine one day as the sun in all his splendor.

It is not the wicked we should hate, but wickedness.

Be like God, compassionate, merciful.

Judge not your neighbor when you have not been in his place.

He who charitably judges his neighbor shall be charitably judged by God.

Do not unto others that which it would be disagreeable to you to suffer yourself, that is the main part of the law; all the rest is only commentary.

From the Old Testament come such morals as:

Let him give his cheek to him that smiteth him (Sam. iii. 30).

Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself (Lev. xix. 18).

He that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor (Prov. xxix. 23).

The meek shall inherit the land (Ps. xxxvii. 11).

History and ancient literature prove that Christianity did not bring a new moral code, did not inaugurate peace, nor purity, nor universal brotherhood, did not originate the ideal human character: but checked civilization, resisted all enlightenment, and deluged the earth with innocent blood in the endeavor to compel mankind to drink old moral wine out of new theological bottles.

Three of the greatest blessings men can have are freedom, liberty of conscience, and knowledge. These blessings Christianity has not given, but has opposed.

It is largely to the ancient Greeks and Romans, to the Arabs and the Indians, to patriots, heroes, statesmen, scholars, scientists, travelers, inventors, discoverers, authors, poets, philanthropists, rebels, skeptics, and reformers that the world owes such advance as it has made towards liberty and happiness and universal loving-kindness.

This advance has been made in defiance of Christian envy, hatred, and malice, and in defiance of Christian tyranny and persecution. After fighting fiercely to defeat the advance of humanity, after slaying and cursing the noblest sons and daughters of the ages, the defeated Christians now claim to have conquered the fields they have lost, to have bestowed the benefits they have denied, to have evolved the civilization they have maimed and damned.

As a Democrat, a Humanist, and a Socialist I join my voice to the indignant chorus which denies those claims.

THE SUCCESS OF CHRISTIANITY

We are told that the divine origin and truth of Christianity are proved by the marvelous success of that religion. But it seems to me that the reverse is proved by its failure.

Christianity owed its magnificent opportunities (which it has wasted) to several accidental circumstances. Just as the rise of Buddhism was made possible by the act of King Asoka in adopting it as the State religion of his vast Indian kingdom, was the rise of Christianity made possible by the act of the Emperor Constantine in adopting it as the State religion of the far-stretched Roman Empire.

Christianity spread rapidly because the Roman Empire was ripe for a new religion. It conquered because it threw in its lot with the ruling powers. It throve because it came with the tempting bribe of Heaven in one hand, and the withering threat of Hell in the other. The older religions, gray in their senility, had no such bribe or threat to conjure with.

Christianity overcame opposition by murdering or cursing all who resisted its advance. It exterminated skepticism by stifling knowledge, and putting a merciless veto on free thought and free speech, and by rewarding philosophers and discoverers with a faggot and the chain. It held its power for centuries by force of hell-fire, and ignorance, and the sword; and the greatest of these was ignorance.

Nor must it be supposed that the persecution and the

slaughter of "Heretics" and "Infidels" was the exception. It was the rule. Motley, the American historian, states that Torquemada, during eighteen years' command of the Inquisition, burnt more than ten thousand people alive, and punished nearly a hundred thousand with infamy, confiscation of property, or perpetual imprisonment.

To be a Jew, a Moslem, a Lutheran, a "wizard," a skeptic, a heretic was to merit death and torture. One order of Philip of Spain condemned to death as "heretics" *the entire population of the Netherlands.* Wherever the Christian religion was successful the martyrs' fires burned, and the devilish instruments of torture were in use. For some twelve centuries the Holy Church carried out this inhuman policy. And to this day the term "free thought" is a term of reproach. The shadow of the fanatical priest, that half-demented coward, sneak and assassin, still blights us. Although that holy monster, with his lurking spies, his villainous casuistries, his flames and devils, and red-hot pincers, and whips of steel, has been defeated by the humanity he scorned and the knowledge he feared, yet he has left a taint behind him. It is still held that it ought to be an unpleasant thing to be an Infidel.

And, yes, there were other factors in the "success" of Christianity. The story of the herald angels, the wise men from the east, the manger, the child God, the cross, and the gospel of mercy and atonement, and of universal brotherhood and peace amongst the earthly children of a Heavenly Father, whose attribute was love — this story possessed a certain homely beauty and sentimental glamour which won the allegiance of many golden-hearted and sweet-souled men and women. These lovely natures assimilated from the chaotic welter of beauty and ashes

called the Christian religion all that was pure, and rejected all that was foul. It was the light of such sovereign souls as Joan of Arc and Francis of Assisi that saved Christianity from darkness and the pit; and how much does that religion owe to the genius of Wyclif and Tyndale, of Milton and Handel, of Mozart and Thomas à Kempis, of Michael Angelo and Rafael, and the compilers of the Book of Common Prayer?

There are good men and good women by millions in the Christian ranks to-day, and it is their virtue, and their zeal, and their illumination of its better qualities, and charitable and loyal shelter of its follies and its crimes, that keep the Christian religion still alive.

Christianity has been for fifteen hundred years the religion of the brilliant, brave, and strenuous races in the world. And what has it accomplished? And how does it stand to-day.

Is Christianity the rule of life in America and Europe? Are the masses of people who accept it peaceful, virtuous, chaste, spiritually minded, prosperous, happy? Are their national laws based on its ethics? Are their international politics guided by the "Sermon on the Mount"? Are their noblest and most Christlike men and women most revered and honored? Is the Christian religion loved and respected by those outside its pale? Are London and Paris, New York and St. Petersburg, Berlin, Vienna, Brussels, and Rome centers of holiness and of sweetness and light? From Glasgow to Johannesburg, from Bombay to San Francisco is God or Mammon king?

If a tree should be known by its fruit, the Christian religion has small right to boast of its "success."

But the Christian will say, "This is not Christianity, but its caricature." Where, then, is the saving grace,

the compelling power, of this divine religion, which, planted by God Himself, is found after nineteen centuries to yield nothing but leaves?

After all these sad ages of heroism and crime, of war and massacre, of preaching and praying, of blustering and trimming; after all this prodigal waste of blood and tears, and labor and treasure, and genius and sacrifice, we have nothing better to show for Christianity than European and American Society to-day.

And this ghastly heart-breaking failure proves the Christian religion to be the Divine Revelation of God!

THE PROPHECIES

ANOTHER alleged proof of the divine verity of the Christian religion is the Prophecies. Hundreds of books — perhaps I might say thousands of books — have been written upon these prophecies. Wonderful books, wonderful prophecies, wonderful religion, wonderful people.

If religious folks did not think by moonlight those books on the prophecies would never have been written. There are the prophecies of Christ's coming which are pointed out in the Old Testament. That the Jews had many prophecies of a Jewish Messiah is certain. But these are indefinite. There is not one of them which unmistakably applies to Jesus Christ; and the Jews, who should surely understand their own prophets and their own Scriptures, deny that Christ was the Messiah whose coming the Scriptures foretold.

Then, we have the explicit prophecy of Christ Himself as to His second coming. That prophecy at least is definite; and that has never been fulfilled.

For Christ declared in the plainest and most solemn manner that He would return from Heaven with power and glory within the lifetime of those to whom He spoke:

> Verily, I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.

These prophecies by Christ of His return to earth may be read in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. They are distinct, and definite, and solemn, and — untrue.

I could fill many pages with unfulfilled prophecies from

the Old and New Testaments. I think the one I give is enough.

Jesus Christ distinctly says that He will come in glory with all His Angels before "this generation" shall have passed away.

This is the year 1903. Christ uttered His prophecy about the year 31.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF

CHRISTIANS declare the religious sentiment to be universal. Even if it were so, that would show a universal spiritual hunger; but would not prove the Christian religion to be its only food.

But the religious sentiment is not universal. I know many young people who have never been taught religion of any kind, who have never read Bible nor Gospel, who never attended any place of worship; and they are virtuous and courteous and compassionate and happy, and feel no more need of spiritual comfort or religious consolation than I do.

They are as gentle, sweet, and merry, and do their duty as faithfully as any Christian, yet to them Heaven and Hell are meaningless abstractions, God and the soul are problems they, with quiet cheerfulness, leave time to solve.

If the craving for religion were universal these young folks would not be free from spiritual hunger. As they are free from spiritual hunger, I conclude that the craving for religion is not born in us but must be inculcated.

Many good men and women will look blank at such heresy. "What!" they will exclaim, "take away the belief in the Bible, and the service of God? Why, our lives would be empty. What would you give us in exchange?"

To which I answer, "The belief in yourselves, and

the belief in your fellow-creatures, and the service of Man."

Such belief and such service will certainly increase the sum of happiness on earth. And as for the Hereafter — no man knoweth. *No* man knoweth.

IS CHRISTIANITY THE ONLY HOPE?

CHRISTIANS tell us that their religion is our only refuge, that Christ is our only saviour. From the wild Salvation Army captain, thundering and beseeching under his banner of blood and fire, to the Academic Bishop reconciling science and transfiguring crude translations in the dim religious light of a cathedral, all the Apostles of the Nazarene carpenter insist that He is the only way. In this the Christian resembles the Hindu, the Parsee, the Buddhist, and the Mohammedan. There is but one true religion, and it is his.

The Rationalist looks on with a rueful smile, and wonders. He sees nothing in any one of these religions to justify its claim to infallibility or pre-eminence. It seems to him unreasonable to assert that any theology or any saviour is indispensable. He realizes that a man may be good and happy in any church, or outside any church. He cannot admit that only those who follow Jesus, or Buddha, or Mahomet, or Moses can be "saved," nor that all those who fail to believe in the divine mission of one or all of these will be lost.

Let us consider the Christian claim. If the Christian claim be valid, men cannot be good, nor happy, cannot be saved, except through Christ. Is this position supported by the facts?

One Christian tells me that "It is in the solemn realities of life that one gets his final evidence that Christianity is true." Another tells me that "In Christ alone

is peace"; another, that "Without Christ there is neither health nor holiness."

If these statements mean anything, they mean that none but true Christians can live well, nor die well, nor bear sorrow and pain with fortitude, do their whole duty manfully, nor find happiness here and bliss hereafter.

But I submit that Christianity does not make men lead better lives than others lead who are not Christians, and there are none so abjectly afraid of death as Christians are. The Pagan, the Buddhist, the Mohammedan, and the Agnostic do not fear death nearly so much as do the Christians.

The words of many of the greatest Christians are gloomy with the fears of death, of Hell, and of the wrath of God.

The Roman soldier, the Spartan soldier, the Mohammedan soldier did not fear death. The Greek, the Buddhist, the Moslem, the Viking went to death as to a reward, or as to the arms of a bride. Compare the writings of Marcus Aurelius and of Jeremy Taylor, of Epictetus and John Bunyan, and then ask yourself whether the Christian religion makes it easier for men to die.

There are millions of Europeans — not to speak of Buddhists and Jews — there are millions of men and women to-day who are not Christians. Do they live worse or die worse, or bear trouble worse, than those who accept the Christian faith?

Some of us have come through "the solemn realities of life," and have *not* realized that Christianity is true. We do not believe the Bible; we do not believe in the divinity of Christ; we do not pray, nor feel the need of prayer; we do not fear God, nor Hell, nor death. We are as happy as our even Christian; we are as good as

our even Christian; we are as benevolent as our even Christian: what has Christianity to offer us?

There are in the world some four hundred and fifty millions of Buddhists. How do they bear themselves in "the solemn realities of life"?

I suggest that consolation, and fortitude, and cheerfulness, and loving-kindness are not in the exclusive gift of the Christian religion, but may be found by good men in *all* religions.

As to the effects of Christianity on life. Did Buddha, and King Asoka, and Socrates, and Aristides lead happy, and pure, and useful lives? Were there no virtuous, nor happy, nor noble men and women during all the millions of years before the Crucifixion? Was there neither love, nor honor, nor wisdom, nor valor, nor peace in the world until Paul turned Christian? History tells us no such gloomy story.

Are there no good, nor happy, nor worthy men and women to-day outside the pale of the Christian churches? Amongst the eight hundred millions of human beings who do not know or do not follow Christ, are there none as happy and as worthy as any who follow Him?

Are we Rationalists so wicked, so miserable, so useless in the world, so terrified of the shadow of death? I beg to say we are nothing of the kind. We are quite easy and contented. There is no despair in our hearts. We are not afraid of bogies, nor do we dread the silence and the dark.

Friend Christian, you are deceived in this matter. When you say that Christ is the *only* true teacher, that He is the *only* hope of mankind, that He is the *only* Saviour, I must answer sharply, that I do not believe that, and I do not think you believe it deep down in your heart. For if Christ is the only Saviour, then thousands

of millions of Buddhists have died unsaved, and you know you do not believe that.

Jeremy Taylor believed that; but you know better.

Do you not *know,* as a matter of fact, that it is as well in this world, and shall be as well hereafter, with a good Buddhist, or Jew, or Agnostic, as with a good Christian?

Do you deny that? If you deny it, tell me what punishment you think will be inflicted, here or hereafter, on a good man who does not accept Christianity.

If you do not deny it, then on what grounds do you claim that Christ is *the* Saviour of all mankind, and that "only in Christ we are made whole"?

You speak of the spiritual value of your religion. What can it give you more than Socrates or Buddha possessed? These men had wisdom, courage, morality, fortitude, love, mercy. Can you find in all the world today two men as wise, as good, as gentle, as happy? Yet these men died centuries before Christ was born.

If you believe that none but Christians can be happy or good; or if you believe that none but Christians can escape extinction or punishment, then there is some logic in your belief that Christ is our only Saviour. But that is to believe that there never was a good man before Christ died, and that Socrates and Buddha, and many thousands of millions of men, and women, and children, before Christ and after, have been *lost.*

Such a belief is monstrous and absurd.

But I see no escape from the dilemma it places us in. If only Christ can save, about twelve hundred millions of our fellow-creatures will be lost.

If men can be saved without Christ, then Christ is not our only Saviour.

Christianity seems to be a composite religion, made up

of fragments of religions of far greater antiquity. It is alleged to have originated some two thousand years ago. It has never been the religion of more than one-third of the human race, and of those professing it only ten per cent. at any time have thoroughly understood, or sincerely followed, its teachings. It was not indispensable to the human race during the thousands (I say millions) of years before its advent. It is not now indispensable to some eight hundred millions of human beings. It had no place in the ancient civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, and Greece. It was unknown to Socrates, to Epicurus, to Aristides, to Marcus Aurelius, to King Asoka, and to Buddha. It has opposed science and liberty almost from the first. It has committed the most awful crimes and atrocities. It has upheld the grossest errors and the most fiendish theories as the special revelations of God. It has been defeated in argument and confounded by facts over and over again, and has been steadily driven back and back, abandoning one essential position after another, until there is hardly anything left of its original pretensions. It is losing more and more every day its hold upon the obedience and confidence of the masses, and has only retained the suffrages of a minority of educated minds by accepting as truths the very theories which in the past it punished as deadly sins. Are these the signs of a triumphant and indispensable religion? One would think, to read the Christian apologists, that before the advent of Christianity the world had neither virtue nor wisdom. But the world is very old. Civilization is very old. The Christian religion is but a new thing, is a mere episode in the history of human development, and has passed the zenith of its power.

SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT

CHRISTIANS say that only those who are naturally religious can understand religion, or, as Archdeacon Wilson puts it, "Spiritual truths must be spiritually discerned." This seems to amount to a claim that religious people possess an extra sense or faculty.

When a man talks about "spiritual discernment," he makes a tacit assertion which ought not to be allowed to pass unchallenged. What is that assertion or implication? It is the implication that there is a spiritual discernment which is distinct from mental discernment. What does that mean? It means that man has other means of understanding besides his reason.

This spiritual discernment is a metaphysical myth.

Man feels, sees, and reasons with his brain. His brain may be more emotional or less emotional, more acute or less acute; but to invent a faculty of reason distinct from reason, or to suggest that man can feel or think otherwise than with his brain, is to darken counsel with a multitude of words.

There is no ground for the assertion that a spiritual faculty exists apart from the reason. But the Christian first invents this faculty, and then tells us that by this faculty religion is to be judged.

Spiritual truths are to be spiritually discerned. What is a "spiritual truth"? It is neither more nor less than a mental idea. It is an idea originating in the brain, and it can only be "discerned," or judged, or understood, by an act of reason performed by the brain.

The word "spiritual," as used in this connection, is a mere affectation. It implies that the idea (which Archdeacon Wilson calmly dubs a "truth") is so exalted, or so refined, that the reason is too gross to appreciate it.

John says: "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Thomas asks: "How do you know?" John says: "Because I *feel* it." Thomas answers: "But that is only a rhapsodical expression of a woman's reason: 'I know because I *know*.' You say your religion is true because you feel it is true. I might as well say it is not true because I feel that it is not true."

Then John becomes mystical. He says: "Spiritual truths must be spiritually discerned." Thomas, who believes that *all* truths, and all errors, must be tried by the reason, shrugs his shoulders irreverently, and departs.

Now, this mystical jargon has always been a favorite weapon of theologians, and it is a very effective weapon against weak-minded, or ignorant, or superstitious, or very emotional men.

We must deal with this deception sternly. We must deny that the human reason, which we know to be a fact, is inferior to a postulated "spiritual" faculty which has no existence. We must insist that to make the brain the slave of a brain-created idea is as foolish as to subordinate the substance to the shadow.

John declares that "God is love." Thomas asks him how he *knows*. John replies that it is a "spiritual truth," which must be "spiritually discerned." Thomas says: "It is not spiritual, and it is not true. It is a mere figment of the brain." John replies: "You are incapable of judging: you are spiritually blind." Thomas says: "My friend, you are incapable of reasoning: you are mentally halt and lame." John says Thomas is a "fellow of no delicacy."

I think there is much to be said in excuse for Thomas. I think it is rather cool of John to invent a faculty of "spiritual discernment," and then to tell Thomas that he (Thomas) does not possess that faculty.

That is how Archdeacon Wilson uses me. In a sermon at Rochdale he is reported to have spoken as follows:

> As regards the first axiom, the archdeacon reaffirmed his declaration as to Mr. Blatchford's disqualification for such a controversy. . . . Whether Mr. Blatchford recognized the fact or not, it was true that there was a faculty among men which, in its developed state, was as distinct, as unequally distributed, as mysterious in its origin and in its distribution, as was the faculty for pure mathematics, for music, for metaphysics, or for research. They might call it the devotional or religious faculty. Just as there were men whose faculties of insight amounted to genius in other regions of mental activity, so there were spiritual geniuses, geniuses in the region in which man holds communion with God, and from this region these who had never developed the faculty were debarred. One who was not devotional, not humble, not gentle in his treatment of the beliefs of others, one who could lightly ridicule the elementary forms of belief which had corresponded to the lower stages of culture, past and present, was not likely to do good in a religious controversy.

Here is the tyranny of language, indeed! Here is a farrago of myths and symbols. "There is a faculty — we may call it the devotional or religious faculty — there are geniuses in the region in which man holds communion with God"!

Why, the good archdeacon talks of the "region in which man holds communion with God" as if he were talking of the telephone exchange. He talks of God as if he were talking of the Postmaster-General. He postulates a God, and he postulates a region, and he postulates a communication, and then talks about all these postulates as if they were facts. I protest against this mystical, transcendental rhetoric. It is not argument.

Who has seen God? Who has entered that "region"? Who has communicated with God?

There is in most men a desire, in some men a passion, for what is good. In some men this desire is weak, in others it is strong. In some it takes the form of devotion to "God," in others it takes the form of devotion to men. In some it is colored by imagination, or distorted by a love of the marvelous; in others it is lighted by reason, and directed by love of truth. But whether a man devotes himself to God and to prayer, or devotes himself to man and to politics or science, he is actuated by the same impulse — by the desire for what is good.

John says: "I feel that there is a God, and I worship Him." Thomas says: "I do not know whether or not there is a God, and if there is, He does not need my adoration. But I know there are men in darkness, and women in trouble, and children in pain, and I know they *do* need my love and my help. I therefore will not pray; but I will work."

To him says John: "You are a fellow of no delicacy. You lack spiritual discernment. You are disqualified for the expression of any opinion on spiritual truths." This is what John calls "humility," and "gentle treatment of the beliefs of others." But Thomas calls it unconscious humor.

Really, Archdeacon Wilson's claim that only those possessing spiritual discernment can discern spiritual truths means no more than that those who cannot believe in religion do not believe in religion, or that a man whose reason tells him religion is not true is incapable of believing religion is true. But what he means it to mean is that a man whose reason rejects religion is unfit to criticise religion, and that only those who accept re-

ligion as true are qualified to express an opinion as to its truth. He might as well claim that the only person qualified to criticise the Tory Party is the person who has the faculty for discerning Tory truth.

My claim is that ideas relating to spiritual things must be weighed by the same faculties as ideas relating to material things. That is to say, man can only judge in religious matters as he judges in all other matters, by his reason.

I do not say that all men have the same kind or quantity of reason. What I say is, that a man with a good intellect is a better judge on religious matters than a man with an inferior intellect; and that by reason, and by reason alone, can truth of any kind be discerned.

The archdeacon speaks of spiritual geniuses, "geniuses in the region in which man holds communion with God." The Saints, for example. Well, if the Saints were geniuses in matters religious, the Saints ought to have been better judges of spiritual truth than other men. But was it so? The Saints believed in angels, and devils, and witches, and hell-fire, and Jonah, and the Flood; in demoniacal possession, in the working of miracles by the bones of dead martyrs; the Saints accepted David and Abraham and Moses as men after God's own heart.

Many of the most spiritually gifted Christians do not believe in these things any longer. The Saints, then, were mistaken. They were mistaken about these spiritual matters in which they are alleged to have been specially gifted.

We do not believe in sorcerers, in witches, in miracle-working relics, in devils, and eternal fire and brimstone. Why? Because science has killed those errors. What is science? It is reason applied to knowledge. The

faculty of reason, then, has excelled this boasted faculty of spiritual discernment in its own religious sphere.

It would be easy to multiply examples.

Jeremy Taylor was one of the most brilliant and spiritual of our divines. But his spiritual perception, as evidenced in his works, was fearfully at fault. He believed in hell-fire, and in hell-fire for all outside the pale of the Christian Church. And he was afraid of God, and afraid of death.

Archdeacon Wilson denies to us this faculty of spiritual perception. Very well. But I have enough mental acuteness to see that the religion of Jeremy Taylor was cowardly, and gloomy, and untrue.

Luther and Wesley were spiritual geniuses. They both believed in witchcraft. Luther believed in burning heretics. Wesley said if we gave up belief in witchcraft we must give up belief in the Bible. Luther and Wesley were mistaken: their spiritual discernment had led them wrong. Their superstition and cruelty were condemned by humanity and common sense.

To me it appears that these men of "spiritual discernment" are really men of abnormally credulous and emotional natures: men too weak to face the facts.

We cannot allow the Christians to hold this position unchallenged. I regard the religious plane as a lower one than our own. I think the Christian idea of God is even now, after two thousand years of evolution, a very mean and weak one.

I cannot love nor revere a "Heavenly Father" whose children have to pray to Him for what they need, or for pardon for their sins. My children do not need to pray to me for food or forgiveness; and I am a mere earthly father. Yet Christ, who came direct from God — who *was* God — to teach all men God's will, directed us to

pray to God for our daily bread, for forgiveness of our trespasses against Him, and that He would not lead us into temptation! Imagine a father leading his children into temptation!

What is there so superior or so meritorious in the attitude of a religious man towards God? This good man prays: for what? He prays that something be given to him, or forgiven to him. He prays for gain or fear. Is that so lofty and so noble?

But you will say: "It is not all for gain or for fear. He prays for love: because he loves God." But is not this like sending flowers and jewels to the king? The king is so rich already: but there are many poor outside his gates. God is not in need of our love: some of God's children are in need. Truly, these high ideals are very curious.

Mr. Augustine Birrell, in his *Miscellanies,* quotes a passage from "Lux Mundi"; and although I cannot find it in that book, it is too good to lose:

> If this be the relation of faith to reason, we see the explanation of what seems at first sight to the philosopher to be the most irritating and hypocritical characteristic of faith. It is always shifting its intellectual defenses. It adopts this or that fashion of philosophical apology, and then, when this is shattered by some novel scientific generalization of faith, probably after a passionate struggle to retain the old position, suddenly and gayly abandons it, and takes up the new formula, just as if nothing had happened. It discovers that the new formula is admirably adapted for its purposes, and is, in fact, what it always meant, only it has unfortunately omitted to mention it. So it goes on, again and again; and no wonder that the philosophers growl at those humbugs, the clergy.

That passage has a rather sinister bearing upon the Christian's claim for spiritual genius.

But, indeed, the claim is not admissible. The Churches have taught many errors. Those errors have been confuted by skepticism and science. It is no thanks

to spiritual discernment that we stand where we do. It is to reason we owe our advance; and what a great advance it is. We have got rid of Hell, we have got rid of the Devil, we have got rid of the Christian championship of slavery, of witch-murder, of martyrdom, persecution, and torture; we have destroyed the claims for the infallibility of the Scriptures, and have taken the fetters of the Church from the limbs of Science and Thought, and before long we shall have demolished the belief in miracles. The Christian religion has defended all these dogmas, and has done inhuman murder in defense of them; and has been wrong in every instance, and has been finally defeated in every instance. Steadily and continually the Church has been driven from its positions. It is still retreating, and we are not to be persuaded to abandon our attack by the cool assurance that we are mentally unfit to judge in spiritual matters. Spiritual Discernment has been beaten by reason in the past, and will be beaten by reason in the future. It is facts and logic we want, not rhetoric.

CHRISTIANITY, we are told, vastly improved the relations of rich and poor.

How comes it, then, that the treatment of the poor by the rich is better amongst Jews than amongst Christians? How did it fare with the poor all over Europe in the centuries when Christianity was at the zenith of its power? How is it we have twelve millions of Christians on the verge of starvation in England to-day, with a Church rolling in wealth and an aristocracy decadent from luxury and self-indulgence? How is it that the gulf betwixt rich and poor in such Christian capitals as New York, London, and Paris is so wide and deep?

Christianity, we are told, first gave to mankind the gospel of peace. Christianity did not bring peace, but a sword. The Crusades were holy wars. The wars in the Netherlands were holy wars. The Spanish Armada was a holy expedition. Some of these holy wars lasted for centuries and cost millions of human lives. Most of them were remarkable for the barbarities and cruelties of the Christian priests and soldiers.

From the beginning of its power Christianity has been warlike, violent, and ruthless. To-day Europe is an armed camp, and it is not long since the Christian Kaiser ordered his troops to give no quarter to the Chinese.

There has never been a Christian nation as peaceful as the Indians and Burmese under Buddhism. It was King Asoka, and not Jesus Christ or St. Paul, who first taught

and first established a reign of national and international peace.

To-day the peace of the world is menaced, not by the Buddhists, the Parsees, the Hindoos or the Confucians, but by Christian hunger for territory, Christian lust of conquest, Christian avarice for the opening up of "new markets," Christian thirst for military glory, and jealousy and envy amongst the Christian powers one of another.

Christianity, we are told, originated the Christlike type of character. The answer stares us in the face. How can we account for King Asoka, how can we account for Buddha?

Christianity, we are told, originated hospitals.

Hospitals were founded two centuries before Christ by King Asoka in India.

Christianity, we are told, first broke down the barrier between Jew and Gentile!

How have Christians treated Jews for fifteen centuries? How are Christians treating Jews to-day in Holy Russia? How long is it since Jews were granted full rights of citizenship in Christian England?

All this, the Christian will say, applies to the false and not to the true Christianity.

Let us look, then, for an instant at the truest and best form of Christianity, and ask what it is doing? It is preaching about Sin, Sin, Sin. It is praying to God to do for Man what Man ought to do for himself, what Man can do for himself, what Man must do for himself; for God has never done it, and will never do it for him.

And this fault in the Christian — the highest and truest Christian — attitude towards life does not lie in the Christians: it lies in the truest and best form of their religion.

It is the belief in Free Will, in Sin, and in a Heavenly Father, and a Future recompense that leads the Christian wrong, and causes him to mistake the shadow for the substance.

COUNSELS OF DESPAIR

"If you take from us our religion," say the Christians, "what have you to offer but counsels of despair?" This seems to me rather a commercial way of putting the case, and not a very moral one. Because a moral man would not say: "If I give up my religion, what will you pay me?" He would say: "I will never give up my religion unless I am convinced it is not *true*." To a moral man the truth would matter, but the cost would not. To ask what one may *gain* is to show an absence of all real religious feeling.

The feeling of a truly religious man is the feeling that, cost what it may, he must do *right*. A religiously minded man *could* not profess a religion which he did not believe to be true. To him the vital question would be, not "What will you give me to desert my colors?" but "What is the *truth?*"

But, besides being immoral, the demand is unreasonable. If I say that a religion is untrue, the believer has a perfect right to ask me for proofs of my assertion; but he has no right to ask me for a new promise. Suppose I say this thing is not true, and to believe anything which is untrue is useless. Then, the believer may justly demand my reasons. But he has no right to ask me for a new dream in place of the old one. I am not a prophet, with promises of crowns and glories in my gift.

But yet I will answer this queer question as fully as I can.

I do not say there is no God. I do not say there is no

"Heaven," nor that the soul is not immortal. There is not enough evidence to justify me in making such assertions.

I only say, on those subjects, that I do not *know*.

I do not know about those things. There may be a God, there may be a "Heaven," there may be an immortal soul. And a man might accept all I say about religion without giving up any hope his faith my bid him hold as to a future life.

As to those "counsels of despair": the question puzzles me. Despair of what?

Let me put the matter as I see it. I think sometimes, in a dubious way, that perhaps there may be a life beyond the grave. And that is interesting. But I think my stronger, and deeper, and more permanent feeling is, that when we die we die finally, and for us there is no more life at all. That is, I suppose, my real belief — or supposition. But do I despair? Why should I? The idea of immortality does not elate me very much. As I said just now, it is interesting. But I am not excited about it. If there is another innings, we will go in and play our best; and we hope we shall be very much better and kinder than we have been. But if it is sleep: well, sleep is rest, and as I feel that I have had a really good time, on the whole, I should consider it greedy to cry because I could not have it all over again. That is how I feel about it. Despair? I am one of the happiest old fogies in all London. I have found life agreeable and amusing, and I'm glad I came. But I am not so infatuated with life that I should care to go back and begin it all again. And though a new start, in a new world, would be — yes, interesting — I am not going to howl because old Daddy Death says it is bedtime. I think somebody, or something, has been very good to allow me to come in

and see the fun, and stay so long, especially as I came in, so to speak, "on my face." But to beg for another invitation would be cheeky. Some of you want such a lot for nothing.

"But," you may say, "the poor, the failures, the wretched — what of them?" And I answer: "Ah! that is one of the weak points of *your* religion, not of mine." Consider these unhappy ones, what do you offer them? You offer them an everlasting bliss, not because they were starved or outraged here — not at all. For your religion admits the probability that those who came into this world worst equipped, who have here been most unfortunate, and to whom God and man have behaved most unjustly, will stand a far greater chance of a future of woe than of happiness.

No. According to your religion, those of the poor or the weak who get to Heaven will get there, not because they have been wronged and must be righted, but because they believe that Jesus Christ can save them.

Now, contrast that awful muddle of unreason and injustice with what you call my "counsels of despair." I say there may be a future life and there may not be a future life. If there is a future life, a man will deserve it no less, and enjoy it no less, for having been happy here. If there is no future life, he who has been unhappy here will have lost both earthly happiness and heavenly hope.

Therefore, I say, it is our duty to see that all our fellow-creatures are as happy here as we can make them.

Therefore I say to my fellow-creatures, "Do not consent to suffer, and to be wronged in this world, for it is immoral and weak so to submit; but hold up your heads, and demand your rights, here and now, and leave the rest to God, or to Fate."

You see, I am not trying to rob any man of his hope of Heaven; I am only trying to inspire his hope on earth.

But I have been asked whether I think it right and wise to "shake the faith of the poor working-man — the faith that has helped him so long."

What has this faith helped him to do? To bear the ills and the wrongs of this life more patiently, in the hope of a future reward? Is that the idea? But I do not want the working-man to endure patiently the ills and wrongs of this life. I want him, for his own sake, his wife's sake, his children's sake, and for the sake of right and progress, to demand justice, and to help in the work of amending the conditions of life on earth.

No, I do not want to rob the working-man of his faith: I want to awaken his faith — in himself.

Religion promises us a future Heaven, where we shall meet once more those "whom we have loved long since and lost awhile"; and that is the most potent lure that could be offered to poor humanity.

How much of the so-called "universal instinct of belief" arises from that pathetic human yearning for reunion with dear friends, sweet wives, or pretty children "lost awhile"? It is human love, and natural longing for the dead darlings, whose wish is father to the thought of Heaven. Before that passionate sentiment reason itself would almost stand abashed: were reason antagonistic to the "larger hope" — which none can prove.

Few of us can keep our emotions from overflowing the bounds of reason in such a case. The poor, tearful desire lays a pale hand on reason's lips and gazes wistfully into the mysterious abyss of the Great Silence.

So I say of that "larger hope," cherish it if you can, and if you feel it necessary to your peace of mind. But do not mistake a hope for a certainty. No priest, nor

pope, nor prophet can tell you more about that mystery than you know. It is a riddle, and your guess or mine may be as near as that of a genius. We can only guess. We do not know.

Is it wise, then, to sell even a fraction of your liberty of thought or deed for a paper promise which the Bank of Futurity may fail to honor? Is it wise, is it needful, to abandon a single right, to abate one just demand, to neglect one possibility of happiness here and now, in order to fulfill the conditions laid down for the attainment of that promised heaven by a crowd of contradictory theologians who know no more about God or about the future than we know ourselves?

Death has dropped a curtain of mystery between us and those we love. No theologian knows, nor ever did know, what is hidden behind that veil.

Let us, then, do our duty here, try to be happy here, try to make others happy here, and when the curtain lifts for us — we shall see.

CONCLUSION

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

I HAVE been asked why I have "gone out of my way to attack religion," why I do not "confine myself to my own sphere and work for Socialism, and what good I expect to do by pulling down without building up."

In reply I beg to say:

1. That I have not "gone out of my way" to attack religion. It was because I found religion *in* my way that I attacked it.

2. That I am working for Socialism when I attack a religion which is hindering Socialism.

3. That we must pull down before we can build up, and that I hope to do a little building, if only on the foundation.

But these questions arose from a misconception of my position and purpose.

I have been called an "Infidel," a Socialist, and a Fatalist. Now I am an Agnostic, or Rationalist, and I am a Determinist, and I am a Socialist. But if I were asked to describe myself in a single word, I should call myself a Humanist.

Socialism, Determinism, and Rationalism are factors in the sum; and the sum is Humanism.

Briefly, my religion is to do the best I can for humanity. I am a Socialist, a Determinist, and a Rationalist because I believe that Socialism, Determinism, and Rationalism will be beneficial to mankind.

I oppose the Christian religion because I do not think the Christian religion is beneficial to mankind, and be-

cause I think it is an obstacle in the way of Humanism.

I am rather surprised that men to whom my past work is well known should suspect me of making a wanton and purposeless attack upon religion. My attack is not wanton, but deliberate; not purposeless, but very purposeful and serious. I am not acting irreligiously, but religiously. I do not oppose Christianity because it is good, but because it is not good enough.

There are two radical differences between Humanism and Christianity.

Christianity concerns itself with God and Man, putting God first and Man last.

Humanism concerns itself solely with Man, so that Man is its first and last care. That is one radical difference.

Then, Christianity accepts the doctrine of Free Will, with its consequent rewards and punishments; while Humanism embraces Determinist doctrines, with their consequent theories of brotherhood and prevention. And that is another radical difference.

Because the Christian regards the hooligan, the thief, the wanton, and the drunkard as men and women who have done wrong. But the Humanist regards them as men and women who have been wronged.

The Christian remedy is to punish crime and to preach repentance and salvation to "sinners." The Humanist remedy is to remove the causes which lead or drive men into crime, and so to prevent the manufacture of "sinners."

Let us consider the first difference. Christianity concerns itself with the relations of Man to God, as well as with the relations between man and man. It concerns itself with the future life as well as with the present life.

Now, he who serves two causes cannot serve each or both of them as well as he could serve either of them alone.

He who serves God and Man will not serve Man as effectually as he who gives himself wholly to the service of Man.

As the religion of Humanism concerns itself solely with the good of humanity, I claim that it is more beneficial to humanity than is the Christian religion, which divides its service and love between Man and God.

Moreover, this division is unequal. For Christians give a great deal more attention to God than to Man.

And on that point I have to object, first, that although they *believe* there is a God, they do not *know* there is a God, nor what He is like. Whereas they do know very well that there are men, and what they are like. And secondly, that if there be a God, that God does not need their love nor their service; whereas their fellow-creatures do need their love and their service very sorely.

And, as I remarked before, if there is a Father in Heaven, He is likely to be better pleased by our loving and serving our fellow-creatures (His children) than by our singing and praying to Him, while our brothers and sisters (His children) are ignorant, or brutalized, or hungry, or in trouble.

I speak as a father myself when I say that I should not like to think that one of my children would be so foolish and so unfeeling as to erect a marble tomb to my memory, while the others needed a friend or a meal. And I speak in the same spirit when I add that to build a cathedral, and to spend our tears and pity upon a Saviour who was crucified nearly two thousand years ago, while women and men and little children are being crucified

in our midst, without pity and without help, is cant, and sentimentality, and a mockery of God.

Please note the words I use. I have selected them deliberately and calmly, because I believe that they are true and that they are needed.

Christians are very eloquent about Our Blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and Our Father which is in Heaven. I know nothing about Gods and heavens. But I know a good deal about Manchester and London, and about men and women; and if I did not feel the real shames and wrongs of the world more keenly, and if I did not try more earnestly and strenuously to rescue my fellow-creatures from ignorance, and sorrow, and injustice, than most Christians do, I should blush to look death in the face or call myself a man.

I choose my words deliberately again when I say that to me the most besotted and degraded outcast tramp or harlot matters more than all the Gods and angels that humanity ever conjured up out of its imagination.

The Rev. R. F. Horton, in his answer to my question as to the need of Christ as a Saviour, uttered the following remarkable words:

> But there is a holiness so transcendent that the angels veil their faces in the presence of God. I have known a good many men who have rejected Christ, and men who are living without Him, and, though God forbid that I should judge them, I do not know one of them whom I would venture to take as my example if I wished to appear in the presence of the holy God. They do not tremble for themselves, but I tremble for myself if my holiness is not to exceed that of such Scribes and Pharisees. Oh, my brothers, where Christ is talking of holiness He is talking of such a goodness, such a purity, such a transcendent and miraculous likeness of God in human form, that I believe it is true to say that there is but one name, as there is but one way, by which a man can be holy and come into the presence of God; and I look, therefore, upon this word of Christ not only as the way of salvation, but as the revelation of the holiness which God demands.
>
> I close these answers to the questions with a practical word

to every one that is here. It is my belief, that you may be good enough to pass through the grave and to wander in the dark spaces of the world which is still earthly and sensual, and you may be good enough to escape, as it were, the torments of the hell which result from a life of debauchery and cruelty and selfishness; but if you are to stand in the presence of God, if you are ever so pure, complete, and glad, "all rapture through and through in God's most holy sight," you must believe in the name and in the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who came into the world to save sinners, and than whose no other name is given in heaven or earth whereby we may be saved.

Such talk as that makes me feel ill. Here is a cultured, educated, earnest man rhapsodizing about holiness and the glory of a God no mortal eye has ever seen, and of whom no word has ever reached us across the gulf of death. And while he rhapsodized, with a congregation of honest bread-and-butter citizens under him, trying hard with their blinkered eyes and blunted souls to glimpse that imaginary glamour of ecstatic "holiness," there surged and rolled around them the stunted, poisoned, and emaciated life of London.

Holiness! — Holiness in the Strand, in Piccadilly, in Houndsditch, in Whitechapel, in Park Lane, in Somerstown, and the Mint.

Holiness! — In Westminster, and in Fleet Street, and on Change.

Holiness! — In a world given over to robbery, to conquest, to vanity, to ignorance, to humbug, to the worship of the golden calf.

Holiness! — With twelve millions of our workers on the verge of famine, with rich fools and richer rogues lording it over nations of untaught and half-fed dupes and drudges.

Holiness! — With a recognized establishment of manufactured paupers, cripples, criminals, idlers, dunces, and harlots.

Holiness! — In a garden of weeds, a hotbed of lies, where hypnotized saints sing psalms and worship ghosts, while dogs and horses are pampered and groomed, and children are left to rot, to hunger, and to sink into crime, or shame, or the grave.

Holiness! For shame. The word is obnoxious. It has stood so long for craven fear, for exotistical inebriation, for selfish retirement from the trials and buffets and dirty work of the world.

What have we to do with such dreamy, self-centered, emotional holiness, here and now, in London?

What we want is citizenship, human sympathy, public spirit, daring agitators, stern reformers, drains, houses, schoolmasters, clean water, truth-speaking, soap — and Socialism.

Holiness! The people are being robbed. The people are being cheated. The people are being lied to. The people are being despised and neglected and ruined body and soul.

Yes. And you will find some of the greatest rascals and most impudent liars in the "Synagogues and High Places" of the cities.

Holiness! Give us common sense, and common honesty, and a "steady supply of men and women who can be trusted with small sums."

Your Christians talk of saving sinners. But our duty is not to save sinners; but to prevent their regular manufacture: their systematic manufacture in the interests of holy and respectable and successful and superior persons.

Holiness! Cant, rant, and fustian! The nations are rotten with dirty pride, and dirty greed, and mean lying, and petty ambitions, and sickly sentimentality. Holiness! I should be ashamed to show my face at

Heaven's gates and say I came from such a contemptible planet.

Holiness! Your religion does not make it.— Its ethics are too weak, its theories too unsound, its transcendentalism is too thin.

Take as an example this much admired passage from St. James:

> Pure religion and undefiled is this before God and the Father, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

The widows and the fatherless are our brothers and sisters and our flesh and blood, and should be at home in our hearts and on our hearths. And who that is a man will work to keep himself unspotted from the world if the service of the world needs him to expose his flesh and his soul to risk?

I can fancy a Reverend Gentleman going to Heaven, unspotted from the world, to face the awful eyes of a Heavenly Father whose gaze has been on London.

A good man mixes with the world in the rough-and-tumble; and takes his share of the dangers, and the falls, and the temptations. His duty is to work and to help, and not to shirk and keep his hands white. His business is not to be holy, but to be useful.

In such a world as this, friend Christian, a man has no business reading the Bible, singing hymns, and attending divine worship. He has not *time*. All the strength and pluck and wit he possesses are needed in the work of real religion, a real salvation. The rest is all "dreams out of the ivory gate, and visions before midnight."

There ought to be no such thing as poverty in the world. The earth is bounteous: the ingenuity of man is great. He who defends the claims of the individual,

or of a class, against the rights of the human race is a criminal.

A hungry man, an idle man, an ignorant man, a destitute or degraded woman, a beggar or pauper child is a reproach to Society and a witness against existing religion and civilization.

War is a crime and a horror. No man is doing his duty when he is not trying his best to abolish war.

I have been asked why I "interfered in things beyond my sphere," and why I made "an unprovoked attack" upon religion. I am trying to explain. My position is as follows:

Rightly or wrongly, I am a Democrat. Rightly or wrongly, I am for the rights of the masses as against the privileges of the classes. Rightly or wrongly, I am opposed to Godship, Kingship, Lordship, Priestship. Rightly or wrongly, I am opposed to Imperialism, and Militarism, and conquest. Rightly or wrongly, I am for universal brotherhood and universal freedom. Rightly or wrongly, I am for union against disunion, for collective ownership against private ownership. Rightly or wrongly, I am for reason against dogma, for evolution against revelation; for humanity always; for earth, not Heaven; for the holiest Trinity of all — the Trinity of man, woman, and child.

The greatest curse of humanity is ignorance. The only remedy is knowledge.

Religion, being based on fixed authority, is naturally opposed to knowledge.

A man may have a university education, and be ignorant. A man may be a genius, like Plato, or Shakespeare, or Darwin, and lack more knowledge. The humblest of unlettered peasants can teach the highest genius something useful. The greatest scientific and

philosophical achievements of the most brilliant age are imperfect, and can be added to and improved by future generations.

There is no such thing as human infallibility. There is no finality in human knowledge and human progress. Fixed authority in matters of knowledge or belief is an insult to humanity.

Christianity degrades and restrains humanity with the shackles of "original sin." Man is not born in sin. There is no such thing as sin. Man is innately more prone to good than to evil; and the path of his destiny is upward.

I should be inclined to call him who denies the innate goodness of mankind an "Infidel."

Heredity breeds different kinds of men. But all are men whom it breeds. And all men are capable of good, and of yet more good. Environment can move mountains. There is a limit to its power for good and for evil, but that power is almost unimaginably great.

The object of life is to improve ourselves and our fellow-creatures, and to leave the world better and happier than we found it.

The great cause of crime and failure is ignorance. The great cause of unhappiness is selfishness. No man can be happy who loves or values himself too much.

As all men are what heredity and environment have made them, no man deserves punishment nor reward. As the sun shines alike upon the evil and the good, so in the eyes of justice the saint and the sinner are as one. No man has a just excuse for pride, or anger, or scorn.

Spiritual pride, intellectual pride, pride of pedigree, of caste, of race are all contemptible and mean.

The superior person who wraps himself in a cloak of

solemn affectations should be laughed at until he learns to be honest.

The masterful man who puts on airs of command and leadership insults his fellow-creatures, and should be gently but firmly lifted down many pegs.

Genius should not be regarded as a weapon, but as a tool. A man of genius should not be allowed to command, but only to serve. The human race would do well to watch jealously and restrain firmly all superior persons. Most kings, jockeys, generals, prize-fighters, priests, ladies'-maids, millionaires, lords, tenor singers, authors, lion-comiques, artists, beauties, statesmen, and actors are spoiled children who sadly need to be taught their place. They should be treated kindly, but not allowed too many toys and sweetmeats, nor too much flattery. Such superior persons are like the clever minstrels, jesters, clerks, upholsterers, storytellers, horse-breakers, huntsmen, stewards, and officers about a court. They should be fed and praised when they deserve it, but they cannot be too often reminded that they are retainers and servants, and that their Sovereign and Master is —

THE PEOPLE.

In a really humane and civilized nation:

There should be and need be no such thing as poverty.

There should be and need be no such thing as ignorance.

There should be and need be no such thing as crime.

There should be and need be no such thing as idleness.

There should be and need be no such thing as war.
There should be and need be no such thing as slavery.
There should be and need be no such thing as hate.
There should be and need be no such thing as envy.
There should be and need be no such thing as pride.
There should be and need be no such thing as greed.
There should be and need be no such thing as gluttony.
There should be and need be no such thing as vice.

But this is not a humane and civilized nation, and never will be while it accepts Christianity as its religion.

These are my reasons for opposing Christianity. If I have said anything to give pain to any Christian, I am sorry and ask to be forgiven. I have tried to maintain "towards all creatures a bounteous friendly feeling."

As to what I said about holiness, I cannot take back a word. Dr. Horton said that without that form of holiness which only a belief in Christ can give we shall only be good enough to barely escape Hell, and, "after passing through the grave, to wander in the dark spaces of the world, which is still earthly and sensual."

I say earnestly and deliberately, that if I can only attain to Heaven and to holiness as one of a few, if I am to go to Heaven and leave millions of my brothers and sisters to ignorance and misery and crime, I will hope to be sent instead into those "dark spaces of the world which is still earthly and sensual" and there to

be permitted to fight with all my strength against pain and error and injustice and human sorrow. I know I shall be happier so. I think I was made for that kind of work, and I fervently wish that I may be allowed to do my duty as long as ever there is a wrong in the world that I can help to right, a grief I can help to soothe, a truth I can help to tell.

Let the Holy have their Heaven. I am a man, and an Infidel. And this is my Apology.

Besides, gentlemen, Christianity is not *true*.

THE END

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